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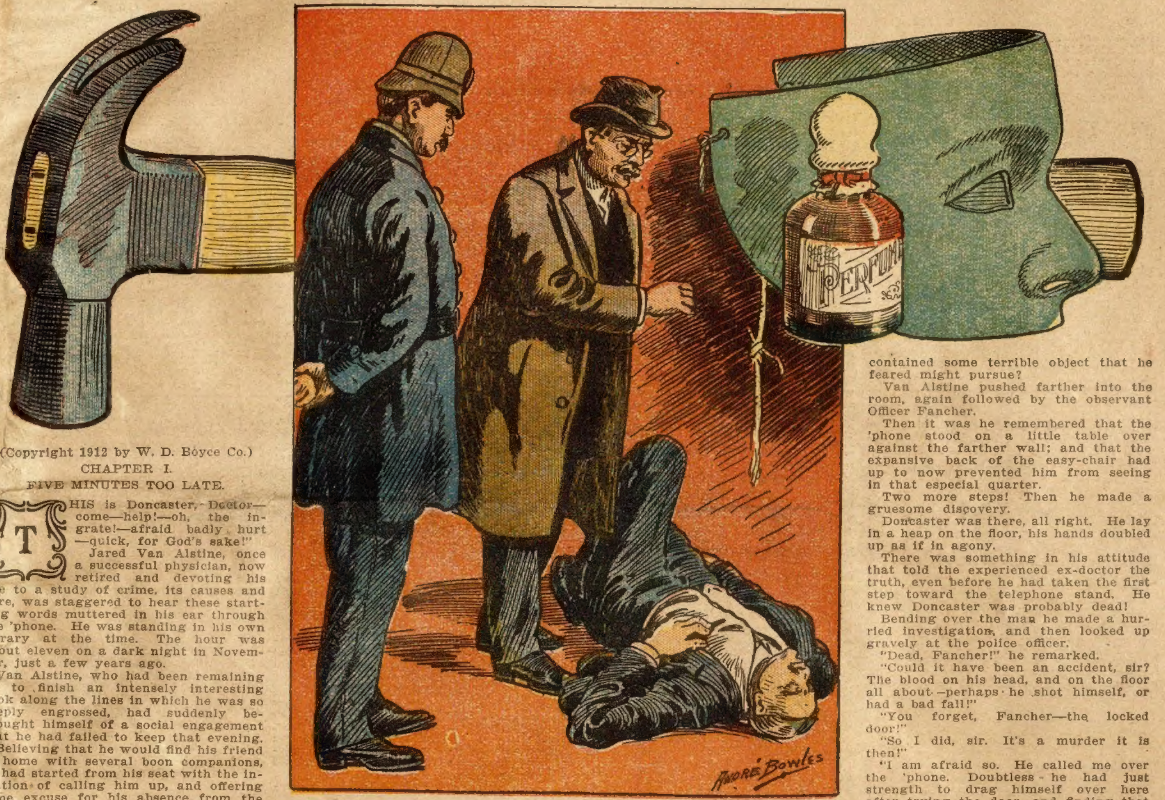
A CLEW BY WIRE;

Or, THE SPUR OF NECESSITY

By ARCHIBALD J. PAXTON



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CHAPTER I.

FIVE MINUTES TOO LATE.

"THIS is Doncaster, Doctor—come—help!—oh, the ingrate!—afraid badly hurt—quick, for God's sake!"

Jared Van Alstine, once a successful physician, now retired and devoting his life to a study of crime, its causes and cure, was staggered to hear these startling words muttered in his ear through the 'phone. He was standing in his own library at the time. The hour was about eleven on a dark night in November, just a few years ago.

Van Alstine, who had been remaining up to finish an intensely interesting book along the lines in which he was so deeply engrossed, had suddenly bethought himself of a social engagement that he had failed to keep that evening.

Believing that he would find his friend at home with several boon companions, he had started from his seat with the intention of calling him up, and offering some excuse for his absence from the social gathering.

Just as he stretched out his hand to pick up the desk 'phone, the bell began to whiz at an alarming rate. And Van Alstine, smiling at the coincidence, placed the receiver to his ear, wondering if it could be Dud Severance at the other end. Then came the thrilling words above.

Doncaster! Why, he lived only a dozen houses up the street, and Van Alstine had seen him not six hours back.

While the rich retired doctor no longer practiced, there were a few among his friends who insisted upon calling upon him for treatment. And Addison Doncaster had been one.

Van Alstine was a man of action. He replaced the instrument on the little table, and without wasting even a precious second to consider, made a streak for the hall.

In passing he snatched a hat from the rack, and in another moment was on the street, running swiftly in the direction of the house.

He had just reached the steps when a burly figure hove in sight, having evidently hidden at the sound of his hasty footfalls. The street light fell upon the shining shield of a patrolman; and this explained his action in hiding.

Naturally he had anticipated that the runner might prove to be some bold crook who had pillaged one of the elegant dwellings in that select neighborhood, and was now bent on making off with his booty.

"Stop! what's your hurry now?"

He threw up his hand, holding the suggestive night stick, and of course the runner came to a pause.

It was just as well; and even at the instant Van Alstine considered himself in great luck to run across a policeman at such a time of need. Every one cannot be so fortunate.

"Hello! Officer Fancher, you're just in time! Something wrong in Doncaster's. Telephoned me for help! Come on up!"

"Sure. Lead the way, Doctor!" answered the other; now recognizing the gentleman as a house owner he had known for years, and for whom he entertained the highest regard.

They went up the front steps two at a time. Yet it was the sharp vision of Van Alstine that first made a significant discovery.

"Look! the window is open here!" he said, in a low but excited voice.

He tried the door, but it was fast.

Why linger, under the circumstances, when those thrilling words of Doncaster, heard over the wire, had declared that haste was so imperative?

Van Alstine immediately swung himself over the side railing or balustrade of the stoop, massive stone that it was. It required little effort to reach the open window; indeed, he remembered at the time that a child could have done it, and not half tried.

Officer Fancher was right at his heels, content to follow in the wake of one whom he respected as a pupil of the great Sherlock Holmes, and to whom he had been indebted more than once in the past for suggestions that had brought glory to his record as a thief-taker.

Fortunately, Van Alstine, having visited many times in the Doncaster house, was perfectly at home, once he passed inside. The policeman, not being so sure, clutched at his coat so as to have some sort of guide in the dark.

They passed through what seemed to be a little waiting room, the parlor being across the central hall. Passing into this latter, Van Alstine groped his way along.

By this time a horizontal shaft of light met his searching eye. He had been anticipating such, and recognized it as seeping out from under a door. It was the library, the room Doncaster lounged in much of the time when at home and well.

Van Alstine remembered that he had left the gentleman in his bed with a slight touch of fever when he called late that afternoon. Still, he might have recovered from his indisposition, and the call of his books offered too strenuous a lure.

Another second, and Van Alstine's groping hand had found the doorknob. To his surprise, when he turned it he failed to get any response. The door was evidently locked!

Instantly Van Alstine snatched out a match from his vest pocket. As he drew this along his trousers, and the flame burst into being, he saw something that gave him a renewed thrill. The key was in the outside of the lock!

"Note this fact, officer!" he exclaimed, as he pointed to the key.

Then turning it, he threw the door open.

There was no longer any need of the match, for the room was brightly illuminated. Both men pushed into the room.

Van Alstine's eyes involuntarily flew to the big chair at the table, where, as he knew, Doncaster was wont to sit reading when taking his ease. It was vacant!

He then looked hurriedly around, and was amazed not to see anything of the other.

Had he gone upstairs again, after sending out that wild appeal for help? If so, had he purposely locked the library door after him, just as though the room contained some terrible object that he feared might pursue?

Van Alstine pushed farther into the room, again followed by the observant Officer Fancher.

Then it was he remembered that the 'phone stood on a little table over against the farther wall; and that the expansive back of the easy-chair had up to now prevented him from seeing in that especial quarter.

Two more steps! Then he made a gruesome discovery.

Doncaster was there, all right. He lay in a heap on the floor, his hands doubled up as if in agony.

There was something in his attitude that told the experienced ex-doctor the truth, even before he had taken the first step toward the telephone stand. He knew Doncaster was probably dead!

Bending over the man he made a hurried investigation, and then looked up gravely at the police officer.

"Dead, Fancher!" he remarked.

"Could it have been an accident, sir? The blood on his head, and on the floor all about—perhaps he shot himself, or had a bad fall!"

"You forget, Fancher—the locked door!"

"So I did, sir. It's a murder it is then!"

"I am afraid so. He called me over the 'phone. Doubtless he had just strength to drag himself over here after trying the door, and finding that he was locked in. I was his physician. I had been here only a few hours before; and his first thought was of me. He knew he needed a doctor the worst kind, and my number was in his mind. I think the poor fellow must have fallen here as he uttered the last word, for you see he dropped the receiver on the floor!"

"That's a fact, sir," said the officer; and the admiration he felt for Doctor Van Alstine was expressed in the awe with which he spoke these few words.

In his mind the Doctor was not far short of a wizard, and there was little he could not discover in connection with such a crime as this. The opportunity for indulging in his favorite study seemed too good to be lost by Van Alstine. Besides, Doncaster was a friend of his, not particularly beloved, it is true, but at whose house he had spent many pleasant evenings with some other fellows, playing whist or bridge.

Van Alstine immediately busied himself in examining the body, from which the last spark of life had fled, as he well knew, some five minutes before. When he became assured that all efforts to revive the owner of the house were useless, he started to pay attention to any evidences of foul play that might point to the identity of the assassin.

CHAPTER II.

THE TELLTALE SCENT.

The first thing which caught the eye of the doctor-detective was the open door of the little house safe that stood over in an obscure corner. Some papers lay on the floor, as though they had been hastily thrown down.

On the library table he discovered a ball of cord, some heavy paper that had been taken from a drawer of the nearest bookcase, and a pair of scissors.

"The work of a thief, Fancher. There you see where the assassin wrapped up some booty taken from the safe, and carried it off in a bundle," remarked Van Alstine, quickly.

"Yes, sir, that's so," replied the other, readily grasping the facts, once they had been called to his attention; though doubtless he might have looked at that table seven times without realizing what its being cluttered up in this manner signified.

"Doncaster was in bed at the time he must have believed he heard some sound down here. You see he is in his pajamas!"

"Which is true, sir; he must have been in bed!" echoed Fancher.

"Doncaster never kept a pistol in the house. He always said he had no use for one, and that if he ever ran across a burglar he would grapple with him. He was absolutely without fear; but I'm afraid his theory worked wrong when it came to the test. Perhaps he was weak after that little attack of fever. Or it may be he received the blow before he could close with the intruder he found here."

He stood above the body with folded arms, thinking deeply. One word which had come faintly over the wire seemed to stand out now as though written in fire: "Ingrate!"

Doncaster had fairly hissed it, as though even in the terrible moment of his approaching dissolution he experienced a loathing in his soul.

That would appear to indicate that the person whom he had surprised rifling his safe, and who in sudden desperation had struck him, must be some one whom he knew; yes, some one for whom he had done favors! This was a significant fact which Van Alstine knew he could not afford to ignore.

"And here's what he did it with, sir."

Officer Fancher as he spoke stooped down to pick up something from the floor. It was a hammer!

Blood showed on its head, and there were even several hairs still clinging to the clot. Nobody could question the evident fact that this tool had been used in dealing that crushing blow, by means of which Doncaster must have been hurled to the floor, senseless for the time being.

As he looked further, he easily saw where the man had fallen and lain for an indefinite time before his senses returned sufficiently for him to get up and stagger to the door. Spots of blood on the rug told that he had really done this.

Upon finding the door locked, Doncaster had returned to the other side of the library. It was then, doubtless, that he remembered his good friend, Dr. Van Alstine. His passage to the 'phone was a zigzag one, proving that even then the great loss of blood, added to the nervous shock, had weakened him terribly.

Then, after sending that disjointed call for help, he must have fallen and expired almost immediately. Just how long he had lain there, after his first drop, would tell the length of time the thief and assassin must have had to make an escape.

"What's that you picked up just now, Fancher?"

As he turned, after following the crooked trail of blood stains back to the 'phone stand, he had seen the big policeman stoop again. Fancher held the article up.

"A black mask! If any other proof were needed to tell us that a burglar did this thing it would be found in that. Any ordinary burglars do not bother with such accessories in these days."

Van Alstine once more recalled the fact that Doncaster had spoken of the unknown as an ingrate. Ah! then he must have had good reason to don some sort of shield to prevent his face from being seen.

"Let me look at it, Fancher."

First of all he saw that the cords with which the mask was intended to be sustained when in use, had been broken.

"It was snatched from his face by Doncaster, who must have instantly rushed upon him without fear. Then he recognized the other; and perhaps in an agony of apprehension the hammer was snatched up, and the fatal blow struck!"

Fancher listened in awe. To him it was as though Van Alstine had actually been an eye witness of the dreadful scene those library walls had so lately looked down upon.

He saw the other raise the black mask, and press it to his nose.

"It seems to me I can detect a faint perfume about this thing. For fear lest it may pass away, tell me if you can smell any such odor, Fancher," he said.

So the big policeman raised the bit of black muslin, and took several hearty sniffs.

"Sure I can, sir. If I didn't know better, I'd say a lady had dropped her mask at a party," he declared immediately.

Van Alstine raised his eyebrows. A lady! This seemed to give the affair a new phase; and yet, as his horrified eyes again fell upon the bloody figure of poor Doncaster, he shook his head. It seemed almost incredible.

Even the nerviest woman would have to be in desperate circumstances to do such a terrible deed as this. And all the evidence went to show that while the crime had been committed in front of the safe, the assassin had cooly made up the bundle of loot at the table while the body of Doncaster lay there in a pool of blood.

One thing was sure—the murderer had been very careful not to go near the stricken man after dealing that fatal blow. In this there was more than usual caution shown. Doubtless he must have considered that his blow had done for the other; and that, having committed himself thus far, he might as well secure that for which he had come.

In thus running over the probable features of the case, Van Alstine could not bring himself to say "she."

It seemed too absurd for belief.

Officer Fancher had gone to the door, which he opened a trifle as though listening.

"I'm dead sure I heard somebody moving upstairs, sir," he explained.

"One of the servants, probably. I only wonder that they have not been down here before now. I happen to know them, and perhaps we might get a pointer if we had them with us."

He hesitated for a moment, as though in doubt. Then, making up his mind to the inevitable, he stepped out into the hall. Something moved on the stairs, more than halfway up.

"Is that you, Philip?" he called out.

A trembling voice answered.

"Philip has gone out for the night, sir. Is that Doctor Van Alstine speaking?"

She had evidently recognized the voice.

"Yes. I want you to come down here, Mrs. Huppy."

"Oh, doctor, what has happened?"

"Never mind. You will know all in good time. Can you come down now?"

"But I've only got my dressing gown on, Doctor?"

"It makes little difference. I must see you on urgent business. Please descend at once."

He gently closed the library door, not wishing the housekeeper to discover the gruesome spectacle beyond. It might send her into hysterics, and he wished to learn whether she knew anything about the late movements of Doncaster before this occurred.

Again he made his way into the little waitingroom, and striking a match, ascertained where the electric light switch was located on the wall. A flood of light filled the small, cozy apartment, just as Mrs. Huppy entered, looking rather gorgeous in her Oriental dressing gown, fashioned kimono-like.

Van Alstine, out of consideration for her, and because he did not wish to attract attention from the street, immediately drew down the shade of the one window in the small room, this being the same by means of which the assassin had left the house, according to all the signs. And then he turned upon the middle-aged woman.

Mrs. Huppy certainly looked frightened enough. To be aroused near the middle of the night by certain suspicious sounds below, and mustering up enough courage after some little time had elapsed, to creep halfway down the stairs only to be confronted by this serious-faced gentleman whom she had always greatly respected, and almost feared—surely this was enough to make her shiver and twist her hands together nervously in dread of what was to come.

"Calm yourself, madam. I want to ask you a few questions upon which much may depend; and I hope you will strive to answer them to the best of your ability."

"Yes, sir, I surely will," she replied, gravely.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE HOUSEKEEPER HEARD.

"You remember my being here to see Mr. Doncaster this evening early, do you not?"

"Yes, sir, although old Philip let you in. I happened to be passing through the upper hall, and you spoke to me."

"That was about five o'clock?"

"I think about that, sir."

"Your master was in bed at the time."

"He was, as you say. I was called in to him to take an order down to the cook."

"For his supper? Then he must have been feeling better soon after I left?"

"He said the medicine acted like magic, and that his fever going, he actually began to feel hungry."

"Did he take his supper in bed?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"He got up then?"

"And dressed, sir."

"Indeed. Possibly he even went downstairs to the diningroom when the meal was ready?"

"That was just what he did, sir. You know we always have dinner in the middle of the day here. Mr. Doncaster is always peculiar about that."

"H'm. That medicine did act quickly, it appears. But Doncaster always was doing unexpected things. He seemed to be a creature of impulse, and rather hotheaded. By the way, what did he do after he had eaten?"

"Came to the library, sir, and read. I took advantage of the fact to make up his room for him."

"He came up when?"

"Just about nine, though I think he was excited over something, for he was talking to himself a great deal and shaking his head."

"Do you know, or can you give a guess as to the cause of his acting in this way?"

The housekeeper looked straight at him.

"I do not know; but perhaps the visit of that young girl may have had something to do with it, sir."

"Do you mean that he had a visitor tonight, after he had eaten his supper, and was in the library?"

"Yes, sir. She came to the door, and as Philip, as I said before, was out, I answered the ring. She said she must see Mr. Doncaster—that it was a case of life and death. I said I would ascertain whether he cared to see her, since he was not well; but she followed me into the hall and entered the library as I opened the door to speak to him."

"Did you know her, Mrs. Huppy?"

"No, sir. I did not."

"Had you ever seen her before?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir."

"She was young, you say?"

"Yes, sir, and very pretty."

"Did Mr. Doncaster seem to know her?"

"I couldn't say. He did and he didn't, sir."

"Please explain what you mean by that. It is of the utmost importance that I know whether he had ever met this young woman before."

"Why, you see, Doctor, he seemed to be startled very much at sight of her as she stood there, wringing her hands like. I heard him cry out: 'Who are you, girl?'"

"That would indicate he had not met her before; but that she reminded him of some one he knew!"

"Yes, sir, that was what I thought, sir."

"Did you close the door then, Mrs. Huppy, and retire?"

"I did, sir; but just as I was softly shutting it I heard her answer him."

"What did she say?"

"I heard her say a name which I supposed must be her own."

"Yes?"

"It was an odd name, one I never heard before, sir; and so I have been repeating it lots of times since—Alma Jones!"

"Alma Jones! H'm! Seems to me I have heard that name somewhere, too. Do you know how long she remained in the library with Mr. Doncaster, Mrs. Huppy?"

"I was downstairs for half an hour, when I heard the front door shut, and that must have been the time she went out. I hurried to the basement window and was just in time to see her hurrying away. She looked back just then, and the light fell on her face."

"Yes?"

There was an impatient interrogation in the way he pronounced that one monosyllable.

"I could see that she was crying as if her heart would break; and sir, she held out her hands just like one would entreating a favor. I am afraid, sir, that whatever her mission could have been, she had not succeeded in convincing the master."

"How soon after that did Mr. Doncaster go up to his sleeping apartment?"

"It may have been an hour, sir. I am not sure."

"He said nothing to you about his visitor?"

"Oh, no, sir, just kept by himself in the library. I knew he had received some sort of a shock, though, from the way he kept shaking his head, and talking low-like to himself when he did go upstairs."

"Did you try the front door before retiring?"

Yes, sir."

"It was locked?"

"Surely, sir."

"Now, I don't suppose you thought it worth while to examine the window fastenings before you went to bed?"

The housekeeper looked at him in wonder.

"Why no, sir. You see, it is Philip's duty to attend to that business; and Mr. Doncaster always secures the library windows after he has been sitting there. Besides, Philip told me they were all right before he left to run up to Bridgeport to spend the night with his old mother, who is ill."

"Oh! he told you they were secured, did he? But I suppose that, given a minute of time alone here in the hall, any one could easily have stepped aside into this little room, for instance, and unfastened the catch of the one window here?"

"I suppose it could be easily done, sir; but——"

"Now tell me just what awakened you; for I presume that you were asleep just now?"

"I thought I heard something like a scuffling sound, followed by a heavy fall."

"Well?"

"I sat up in bed trembling, hardly knowing whether something had really happened, or my fright had come through a vivid dream. Minutes passed away, and not hearing anything more I had just lain down again, when I caught the sound of the telephone."

"Go on, please," as she hesitated, as if to catch her breath.

"I fancied that I could hear Mr. Doncaster speaking, though his voice was very weak, and I could not make out a single word."

"You sleep on the second floor, do y
not?"

"Yes, sir, back. The rest of the h
are above."

"Did you get up then?"

"Why, no, sir. I supposed that I h
dreamed it all, and tried to compose m
self to sleep, when I heard a sound aga
It was like a key turned in a lock."

"Ah, yes, it did go with a squeak!" sa
the other, grimly.

"By this time my nerves would
allow me to remain longer in bed.
seemed to just feel that there was son
thing mysterious going on down belo
So, shaking as if I had suddenly tak
cold, I crawled out, and got my sl
pers and dressing gown on. Then
started down the stairs. It was just th
you opened the library door, and cal
to me."

"You recognized my voice?"

"Yes, sir, and saw you as well. B
oh! Doctor, what was that officer doi
in there?"

Apparently she had caught sigh
Fancher when the door was momenta
ily opened.

"He came in with me when I
tered. Mr. Doncaster called to me
the 'phone to come over."

"But—the front door was locked?"

"Yes. We entered by this wind
here, which we found wide open!"

"Oh!"

"That was why I was particular
ask you about its being fastened at
time you retired."

"The window open! Then perhap
did hear something, and it was no
dream!"

"You certainly did, madam. The sc
that awakened you was undoubte
caused by the fall of Mr. Doncaster af
he had been struck on the head by
hammer in the hands of a thief, wh
he had dihcovered robbing his safe!"

Mrs. Huppy shuddered.

"My God! can that be possible.
Tell me, was he badly injured?"
gasped, laying her hands on his
entreatingly.

"He recovered a short time late
finding that he had been lock
thought of me. That was when
heard him speaking at the 'phone."

"Yes, but Mr. Doncaster——"

"I mean to tell you, for you
learn the truth presently, at any
Mrs. Huppy. Restrain yourself,
and summon all your nerve to the
For just as he succeeded in calli
and begging me to come over
delay, Mr. Doncaster must hav
to the floor, and expired instantly

"Dead?" almost whispered the
keeper.

"It is too true! There has bee
bery committed here this night; bu
is not the worst, for a most u
murder has been carried out, undo
edly in the hope and expectation
hiding the identity of the thief!"

And so far as he could see just
the emotion of the housekeeper wa
uine; for she trembled as mig
aspen leaf, while the color fled f o
horrified face.

CHAPTER IV.

NUMBER 47 CALICO LANE.

Van Alstine was done with the h
keeper. He did not believe that
could give him any more informa

Once it did flash through his
that possibly some member of
caster's household might deserve
name of "ingrate." But he put it
him as he looked into those tro
eyes of Mrs. Huppy. Really, she
the last person any reasonable man
suspect.

"You can go up to your room
and dress, madam. I am afraid you
not secure any more sleep this
night. But do not arouse the
servants, he said, calmly, as thou
wished to influence her to some e

"If they should hear you m
about downtsairs, Doctor, they
come to my room. Both of the
nervous girls, you know?"

"Then keep them with you, t
them nothing more than you c

He stepped over, closed the [illegible]
and locked it, leaving the [illegible]
down. There was not the [illegible]
to tell the identity of the pe
had passed through this open
doubtless not twenty minutes be

When he turned again the housek
had gone, and he could hear the
creaking under her weight as sh
cended.

Van Alstine returned to the
room. Here he found the poli
waiting patiently; for Fancher
good pavement pounder, and could
on a corner indefinitely, watching
suspicious doorway.

Once more, and as he knew, f
last time, the doctor-detective s
the library, looking for some mor
itive clews. When the police
rived upon the scene in response
call of Fancher, there would be
to his possibilities in this line. H
make hay while the sun shone.

When he came to the table
started to examine underneat
wrapping paper and other thin
cluttered the limited space, he
discovery that gave him pause.
of paper was held under a glass
as though it had been placed
cently.

It bore an address, written in
and apparently in a woman's han

tainly the writing bore not the faintest resemblance to the bold chirography which he remembered as dominating all Doncaster's work with the pen. 47 Calico Lane!

It sounded very much like an address in London, where they have so many queer courts and thoroughfares, and speak of the great Bank of England as the "Old Lady of Threadneedle Street." And yet it chanced that Van Alstine knew of such a short block, down in a certain congested part of New York, where the submerged millions live.

Could the girl visitor have left this address? Was there, could there be, any truth in the wild theory that had flashed through his brain, to the effect that she had made preparations for entering by means of that window in the waiting-room; and returning later to open the safe of the rich man, had been surprised in the act?

47 Calico Lane! He placed the paper in his pocket for reference.

First on the ground, he felt that he had a right to proceed in the investigation, regardless of the many clever city detectives who would soon be clustering about this room, indulging in theories, and running down imaginary clews looking to the finding of a regular dyed-in-the-wool burglar.

The muslin mask he also secured. And he noted that the faint trace of perfume still lingered in its folds!

Would he have to depend upon these two clews to lead him to the guilty party?

The presence of several nails on the table gave him reason to suspect that the hammer with which the deed was committed must belong to the house, and that during the day recently passed Mr. Doncaster may have been using it for some purpose or other. If this proved true, then there was nothing to be learned through this channel.

Wishing to make positive about this fact before leaving the house, Van Alstine took the gruesome tool in his hand, and ascended the stairs.

He could hear the housekeeper moving about, and in this way had no difficulty in learning where her room was located. A knock on the door caused her to open it hurriedly. At sight of the gentleman she gave an exclamation of renewed alarm.

"Please compose yourself, Mrs. Huppy. Do you happen to know whether Mr. Doncaster was using a hammer at any time yesterday?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"You are sure of that, are you?"

"Well, I heard him hammering for quite some time; and besides, Philip was unable to find the tool, and had to ask me, for I had put it away securely, and in a place he didn't happen to think of."

"Oh, then you handled it?"

"Yes, sir, often."

"You are possibly familiar with this hammer, then?"

"Very familiar, sir. I knocked a small piece off one of the claws the last time I used it."

"Then this must be the identical hammer, for I noticed a fragment missing, just as you claim."

He held it up before her. Mrs. Huppy gurgled deep down in her throat, and if anything her face turned whiter than before. For of course her horrified eyes had instantly discovered the clotted blood that marked the head of the fatal hammer, and she knew what that implied.

"Please look at it closely, and tell me if I am correct," said those quiet, even tones that seemed to hold her in a thrall.

She bent her head, with an effort and a shudder.

"Yes, sir."

"You are positive this is the tool which belongs in this house?"

"I am sure, sir."

"That settles the question then, for it was not brought here by the person who used it to such terrible purpose."

"Is that all you wanted to know, Doctor?" she asked weakly.

"It is. I am going out now, and shall see the officer in charge. He will communicate with headquarters, and presently come those who will take charge here. For as you can easily understand, the only thing left for us now is to find out who killed Mr. Doncaster, and have the law take its course."

And while he was saying this Van Alstine himself shivered a bit. For he had suddenly remembered just where he had heard that singular name of Alma Jones, and the knowledge came to him with a severe jolt.

"Poor Frank!" he muttered, "this threatens to be a rough deal for the brave fellow!"

He passed down the stairs. Doncaster would use them no more; possibly strangers must presently occupy this fine mansion on Riverside Drive, since so far as was known the dead man had no kith and kin—at least, not to the knowledge of Van Alstine.

He stepped to the library for a few last words with Officer Fancher. Besides, he wished to replace that hammer on the spot where he had found it.

The policeman watched him tear away a small piece of the wrapping paper, and then cut off a few inches of the cord, which articles he placed carefully in his pocket.

"You know your duty, Fancher?" he said, at last.

"Yes, sir, I hope I do."

"Then get busy as soon as I am gone. And be sure you explain to Captain Duffy that I am striving to the utmost to assist in the carrying out of justice. He is a good friend of mine, and will give me all the chances possible before letting loose the sleuths of the department to smother the trail."

Van Alstine was smiling when he said this, for he knew that he had in his possession the most important shreds of evidence in the case, lacking which those others might hunt far and wide without finding any recompense.

He looked at his watch as he was about to leave the lighted library where a man lay in his blood, victim to the passion of avarice. It was just half-past eleven.

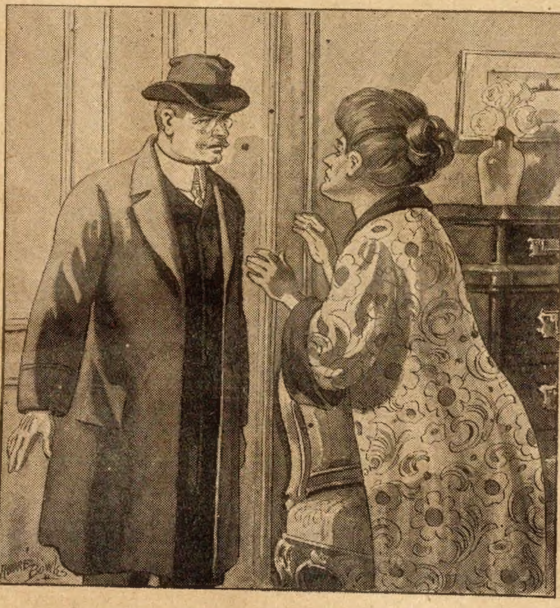
That meant he had been less than half an hour connected with the affair, since it was about three minutes past the hour when he heard those thrilling, jerky sentences over the wire.

He switched off the light in the small room alongside the hall, leaving the latter in darkness, saving a shaft that fell through where the library door stood ajar. And in another moment Van Alstine had passed out by way of the door.

He had left one of the most puzzling mysteries behind him, and was now fully launched upon his self-imposed task of trying to learn whose the hand by which Addison Doncaster had come to his death.

The obligation seemed monumental, the haze before him blinding, and through it all he saw but that address: 47 Calico Lane!

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this strange story. You will find it strong and captivating to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.



"Calm yourself, Madam!"

* * *

Had Made Up His Mind.

A Cleveland lawyer tells how, during a trial, one of the jurors suddenly rose from his seat and fled from the courtroom. He was, however, arrested in his flight before he had left the building, and brought back.

"I should like to know what you mean by such an action as this," demanded the judge, in a lenient tone, however, as he knew the man, an elderly German, to be a simple, straightforward person.

"Vell, your honor, I vill exblain," said the juror. "Ven Mr. Jones finished mit his talking my mind vas clear all through, but ven Mr. Smith begins his talking, I becomes all confused again already, and I says to minself, 'I better leave at vonce,' because, your honor, to tell the truth, I didn't like der vay der argument vas goin."

* * *

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

IN ABSENCE.

The house is drear and dark and lone,
  The kitchen and the hall,
And in the living room, I own,
  There seems no light at all;
Upstairs or down 'tis just the same,
  No joy close by can stay—
For pleasure's blind and deaf and lame
  Since mother's gone away.

The flowers in the garden sigh
  And droops each pretty head;
Somebody speaks to me, and I
  Must wonder what was said.
The whole place has a downcast air;
  The bluest skies seem gray,
And there's one more than empty chair
  When mother's gone away.

I think it may be good for us
  From her awhile to be;
We get a true perspective thus
  And judge her rightfully.
She is the queen of all the earth,
  A queen with loving sway.
Ah, well we know her sterling worth
  Since mother's gone away.

* * *

He Liked Oysters.

"When I was in the produce business in Philadelphia years ago," said an old merchant, "I had among my country shippers a Pennsylvania German by the name of Jacob Snyder. He did not often come to the city, but when he did it was a great occasion with him and he expected some attention. So one morning in the fall, when he turned up in my store about 10 o'clock, I said to him:

"'Jacob, you must have made an early start from home to get here so soon. How would you like to have a bit of lunch right away? Do you like oysters?'

"'Vy,' he said, 'I couldt eat a few oysters.'

"So we went around to a neighboring oyster cellar, and I ordered two stews.

"'Now Jacob,' said I, 'while we are waiting, what do you say to some raw?'

"'Vell,' he replied, 'I don't mind.'

"So we had half a dozen raw apiece, and as the stews had not yet come, we had another half dozen on the half-shell.

"When the stews were dispatched, I asked, as a matter of form, if he would not have another, and he said:

"'Vell, them's pretty goot oysters, and I don't mind if I do haf another stew.'

"I nibbled crackers while he ate stew No. 2, and when he had finished I said to him:

"'They pan oysters very well here. Do you like panned oysters as well as stewed?'

"'Vy, I like oysters any way. I don't mind if I haf a pan.'

"I ordered one for him, and, that disposed of, I suggested a few fried.

"'Vell,' he observed, 'I haf eat fried, and fried is goot. I don't mind.'

"By the time he had finished that order—and I made it a dozen—it was high noon, and I did not feel that I could afford to test Jacob's capacity further. So, paying the bill, I piloted him out, and as we walked along I said to him:

"'Jacob, you're right fond of oysters, aren't you?'

"'Villiam,' he replied, with more animation than he had yet shown, 'I'm wery fond of oysters. Vy do you know, I sometimes belief I couldt make a meal of 'em!'"

COFFEE vs. COLLEGE

Student Had to Give Up Coffee.

Some people are apparently immune to coffee poisoning—if you are not, Nature will tell you so in the ailments she sends as warnings. And when you get a warning, heed it or you get hurt, sure. A young college student writes from New York:

"I had been told frequently that coffee was injurious to me, and if I had not been told, the almost constant headaches with which I began to suffer after using it for several years, the state of lethargic mentality which gradually came upon me to hinder me in my studies, the general lassitude and indisposition to any sort of effort which possessed me, ought to have been sufficient warning.

"But I disregarded them till my physician told me a few months ago that I must give up coffee or quit college. I could hesitate no longer, and at once abandoned coffee.

"On the advice of a friend I began to drink Postum, and rejoice to tell you that with the drug of coffee removed and the healthful properties of Postum in its place I was soon relieved of all my ailments.

"The headaches and nervousness disappeared entirely, strength came back to me, and my complexion which had been very, very bad, cleared up beautifully.

"Better than all, my mental faculties were toned up, and became more vigorous than ever, and I now feel that no course of study would be too difficult for me." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

"There's a reason," and it is explained in the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

* * *

A young man may be able to paddle his own canoe on the sea of matrimony if he isn't accompanied by a female boat rocker.

* * *

WONDERFUL GERMAN REMEDY.

Family Remedy Discovered 300 Years Ago for Skin Troubles.

I want everyone suffering from carbuncles, milk leg, tumor, boils, sore eyes, skin diseases, ulcers, cuts, bruises, or rheumatism to use **Heirloom Salve.** I want everyone who wants to save suffering and doctors' bills to cure themselves at home with this wonderful old German family remedy.

This remedy was discovered nearly 300 years ago at Cloister Marchthal, Wurstemburg, Germany, by Prior Schwartz, and has been handed down in my family. Its healing powers have astonished physicians for centuries. When I was delirious from fever and in terrible pain with a tumor on the left side I applied the salve, and in two days the tumor opened and the impurities passed away, and since then I have never had a return of this ailment.

I want everybody to know what this grand and inexpensive "Heirloom" will do, and about the hundreds of cases wherein it has accomplished almost miraculous results.

If you will write me today I will tell you all about this ancient German remedy and how to use it at home, and I will help you to health.

MRS. O. REUTER,
308 E. 35th St., Kansas City, Mo.

* * *

A girl may frankly admit that another man kissed her, but she always adds that is was on the cheek or forehead.

* * *

INCUBATOR FREE TRIAL.

The Jones, Post Company, a large mail-order house located at 681 Liberty Street, Kansas City, Mo., are making a very unusual offer. They offer to send to anyone an Improved Great Western Incubator for forty days free trial so that you can hatch one brood of chickens at their expense. Made in either hard wood case or galvanized iron throughout. If you are interested in chickens, you should write them at once, stating which incubator you prefer and size wanted.

* * *

Many a village gossip keeps posted by hanging around the postoffice.

* * *

FREE ASTHMA CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 115 Lane Building, St. Marys, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

* * *

Isn't it queer how narrow minded the people are who argue with you?

* * *

WANTED—RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS.

Hundreds of Ry. Mail Clerks, commencing at $800, will be appointed from Spring examinations everywhere. Interested readers should send postal immediately to Franklin Institute, Dept. S-79, Rochester, N.Y., for examination schedule; free coaching and sample questions from previous examinations.

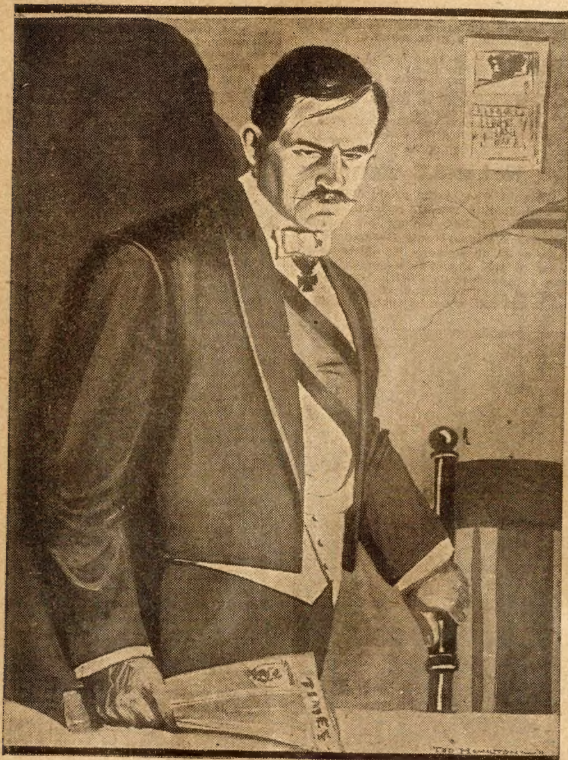
* * *

Things don't always go like clockwork for those who live on tick.

Marrying a Title;

Or, LOVE THAT TRIUMPHED

By Weldon J. Cobb



'My revenge is near," he gloated, "and what a revenge."

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CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNT DE BLAUVOIS.

MONSIEUR Vansant?"

"I am that gentleman."

"Allow me, sir!"

The banker looked up with mingled curiosity and interest as his head clerk ushered in a stranger. The latter would have attracted attention anywhere. He was a fashion-plate as to dress. From the glossy silk hat to the well-kept shoes, there was not a flaw or imperfection.

Likewise, his manner, the courteous smile, the well-bred tender of his card, enforced a certain admiration, despite his foppishness.

The banker glanced at the bit of pasteboard with some curiosity. It read: "Count de Blauvois."

In one corner was a crest and a coat of arms, in which lions, eagles, and knightly armor figured profusely.

"My credentials will follow, my dear Monsieur Vansant," declared the foreigner. "I have been recommended to your estimable house by Valdez & Co., bankers of New Orleans."

"They are correspondents of this bank," replied Vansant loftily. "I am happy to know you, Count."

"It shall be of mutual benefit, I trust," said the foreigner, twirling his long, well-waxed mustachios. "For the present I desire to make—what you call it?—ah, a small initial deposit to my personal account in your bank. Yes, here it is."

The visitor handed a certified check on a bank in another city to Vansant. It was for quite a respectable amount—$5,000.

"For my incidental expenses only," explained the Count, in a light, careless tone. "I shall not wish to draw except for personal expenses—possibly $500 a week."

This was a right royal, real kind of a Count, indeed, the banker decided. Five thousand dollars a mere bagatelle! Five hundred dollars per week! He hoped further business would come and grow with this liberal-minded sprig of nobility who had fallen across his business path.

"Later," proceeded the Count, amiably, "we may have much larger mutual transactions. This, my dear Monsieur Vansant, as agent for a great syndicate in Paris."

"You represent some French interests, do you?" inquired the practical-minded banker, hungrily.

"The largest. It embraces some of the leaders on the Bourse, a fair sprinkling of the nobility, and many, many members of the Chamber of Deputies. In fact," declared De Blauvois airily, "I control, or rather direct, a fund of 50,000,000 francs."

The banker could not repress a gasp of mingled astonishment and cupidity.

"That is a very large amount of money, Count," he said.

"Ah, so-so," returned the foreigner, indifferently. "You understand, the syndicate seeks something better than four per cent. They have learned that in this country there are propositions paying three or four times that amount in dividends annually."

"Why, yes, indeed!" exclaimed Vansant, eager as a trained hound on the trail of blood. "I myself have just purchased an electric-power proposition out of which I have made fully twenty per cent within thirty days."

"The very thing!" cried the Count, delightedly. "Public utilities, something mechanical and tangible—that is the class of investments I shall seek. Ah, sir, if I could presume that you would co-operate with me in my selections! Your expert judgment, your valuable advice!"

"I will be more than glad to give you the benefit of my experience," promised Vansant. "You intend to remain in Irondale, Count?"

"Here and the vicinty," replied the foreigner. "I love the America. I am charmed with your beautiful ladies and interested in your splendid, open-hearted men. I shall call upon you frequently, sir."

"I sincerely hope you will do so," answered the dazzled banker promptly.

The newspapers chronicled the arrival of the Count the next day. When Blanche heard her father's story, she betrayed no unusual outward excitement, but she managed to come into the private office when the foreigner was with her father the next day.

That evening she astonished Vansant by referring to some expensive purchases of the day. She had spent nearly five thousand dollars on her wardrobe. She outlined a plan for refurnishing the house.

"Why, Blanche!" exclaimed her father, "you will soon be on the way to ruin, with such extravagance."

"Trust me, father," replied the dutiful daughter. "It shall all come back twofold. Did you ascertain the points I spoke to you about?"

"As far as possible. The credentials of the Count are bonafide."

"He is a real member of the nobility?"

"There is little doubt of that."

"And wealthy?"

"The De Blauvois family, I understand, own several banks and castles in France. They are rated millionaires."

"And he is unmarried?"

"He told me so himself."

"Then we must lose no time nor opportunities in taking him up. He will naturally be the social lion of the season here. The Marsdens must have no chance to forestall us. Now, listen, father."

"I am truly attentive, Blanche."

"We must arrange to have a series of brilliant social events at the house here."

"That will be costly."

"It shall come out of my own capital," promised Blanche. "You must impress the Count, and in fact everybody else, with the idea that you have recently made some very fortunate investments, and are worth over a million."

"That is not difficult."

"I told you I wanted that $25,000 to secure a wealthy husband. Better still, here is my golden opportunity to marry a title."

"You are a shrewd girl, my dear!" laughed Vansant admiringly.

"At one stroke I shall settle the question of my social supremacy in Irondale," went on Blanche, triumphantly, "and gain a sweet revenge against the Marsdens. A countess, father, the day I become the wife of Count de Blauvois, I shall have reached the acme of my highest hopes."

The sordid banker acquiesced in all the manifold schemes of his clever daughter. Within a week the Count was a daily visitor at the bank, and a grand reception was announced at the Vansant mansion.

One evening the Count rode up to the house in an automobile to take Blanche to the opera. Just as they came down the broad marble steps, Martin Blomer chanced to pass by.

The brilliant electric lights on the porch of the Vansant mansion shone dazzlingly down upon the foreigner and his beautiful, bejeweled companion.

"H'm!" muttered the outcast journalist, in fine scorn, as his glance swept the fair, treacherous face of the woman who had wrecked his life, "another fly in the web, eh? Hello!"

He was unobserved by the smiling Blanche and her courteous escort. At the latter Blomer stared strangely, fixedly, as the machine whirled from view.

Then, a far-away, speculative gleam in his eyes, he passed along to where a neighbor was gazing with natural interest after the automobile.

"I say," spoke Blomer, in his usual bluff, offhand way, "who was that?"

"That was Miss Blanche Vansant."

"Oh, yes, I know that," said Blomer. "But her escort?"

"He is the Count de Blauvois."

"Got it!" suddenly and forcibly ejaculated Blomer, leaving his informant unceremoniously, the latter staring after him as though he adjudged him a being bereft of his senses. "Got it—I remember him now!"

Martin Blomer turned into the shadow of a side street. Every once in a while he burst into a snarl of dissonant laughter and mockery.

"Yes, I remember the Count de Blauvois now!" he gloated. "Count! ho! ho! Ah, what a goodly wad of the ready cash I could get for a certain story I could write for the press this night! But no, no! The time is not yet ripe. If I were starving, freezing, I would not forego the deadly revenge against false-hearted Blanche Vansant, now surely, safely in my grasp!"

CHAPTER XIII.

'NEATH BLUE BRAZILIAN SKIES.

One day, two days from New York on the ocean. One week, two weeks, Rio de Janeiro. Then the Amazon, and sixty days after bidding a stealthy and peaceful adieu to the Vansant home, Florence Henderson stood in the midst of a desolate wilderness.

Those who had known the timid, shrinking girl of Irondale, whom the

(Continued on page sixteen.)

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I Will Send This Book to You at Expense.
THE JOY OF LIVING IS THE HER AGE OF THE LEAN. I WAS STOUT,—AND I KNOW.
My friends were charitable and called it obesity; others referred t as being STOUT, but I know, it was plain bulky weight. I was miseral you too, are equally miserable if yo too stout.
To reduce your weight you must the cause, you must get at the reason.
I FOUND THE CAUSE,—THE R WAS EASY.
Before I succeeded, I tried every within reason and some things reason.
It was maddening,—disgusting.
All I had to do was to remove cause, and I swear under oath, th my simple method, without drugs, icine, harmful exercises, or starv diet, I reduced my weight 37 poun five weeks, and guarantee that I c the same for you. I do not use me of any kind or worthless stuff to r the body, but a simple home treat even a child can use it without Through this marvelous combin home treatment, I succeeded becau had found the right way. I can climb to the summit of Pike's Peak ease. I could not do that until I taken off 37 pounds of my ponde weight.
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I have printed a book for you tled, "Weight Reduction Without Dr which I am giving away without c prepaid to you, so that you may of my successful method and be a permanently reduce your weight amount up to 70 pounds, without ful exercises or starvation diet, dru medicines.
Send for my book, "Weight R tion Without Drugs." It is yours fo asking, and I will be glad to send you, postage prepaid.
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HE QUEEN'S SIGNET;

Or, Lady Castlemain's Crime

By T. C. HARBAUGH

right 1912 by W. D. Boyce Co.) in No. 1, Jan. 6. Subscriptions egin with that issue, or back can be obtained from news , our agents, or by mail from the of publication.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIVALS.

THERE was one thing remembered by King Charles in connection with the robbery of Lady Castlemain on the highroad between Buckingham Palace and Whitehall, and that was wk's reference to the Queen's Catherine had declared to her rd that the ring must have been from her apartments, and she y intimated that the thief was in nanner connected with the court. things set the King to thinking.

t did the Hawk know about the and why had he flung it into astlemain's teeth? Charles had a nderlying affection for his wife, as so ruled by his favorites, omen, all her bitter enemies, ad grown cold towards his ouse. had said that he should divorce and send her back to Portu- e could not think of going so machinations of the conspira- been directed at the Queen ever bridal, and there was nothing nd mean for them to attempt in get her out of their sight.

ing, after deep reflection, re- o do two things. He would find t Harle the Hawk knew about net, and also where Noel had . He knew nothing as yet of the to arrest Noel, nor of Rosa- adventure with Castelmain's s. Buckingham was treacherous; Cardinal Lascelles could not be , and the monarch knew not to turn in his perplexing dilemma.

the morning after the fete at gham Palace, as Charles emerged is chambers, he came face to face oy LaFonde in one of the halls. rl, who was of French extraction, ful, amiable, and cunning, was ened by the monarch's sudden ap- ce and bent the knee as her d face lost color. She had passed sleepless hours over her share in ansaction of the signet, into which ad been drawn by the designing uchess, and then she kne that d lost Noel forever.

at now, my bird?" exclaimed s, as he raised her to her feet. is your name, gentle one?"

La Fonde."

pretty name, by my troth! ou be one of her majesty's maids of "

y. I serve Lady Castlemain," an- red Foy, blushing.

udden thought shot through the mind.

me in here," said he, opening a at his left, and Foy tremblingly d.

ding in the middle of the room, oked at the King and dropped her to the floor.

hat is all this I hear about the 's signet?" continued Charles, in a tinctured with sterness. "Dost anything about it, girl?"

trembled more than ever.

wish I were dead, your majesty!" ailed.

hat! a pretty thing like you?" ed the King. "I'll find a lover for f you have none. But the signet her majesty has recovered?"

's face went whiter than ever. n Lady Castlemain's threat ringing her ears, she dared not confess, yet was confronted by the King himself, his manner was not pleasing.

u did not filch the ring?" resumed es.

y, nay, your majesty!"

t why turn so white when I refer ?" and the King's hand suddenly ed her wrist.

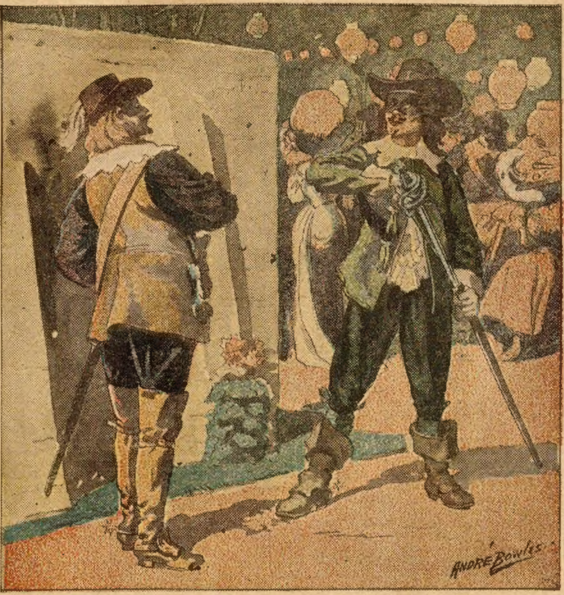
rdon!" exclaimed Foy, recoiling as she could.

grant that in advance," smiled the Monarch. "If you have a t——"

t me keep it, for the Lord's y!" broke in Foy, on the edge of her recollection.

arles for a moment transfixed her his gaze, and then abruptly re- d her. She bounded to the door a cry. The King opened it, and ed down the corridor like a hunted

unds! there's something afoot!" the King. "I'll throw out a net atch some fish. I'll find both young le and the highwayman. If I had pressed the girl! But no! She that she did not purloin the signet. st discover how it came into Nev- possession. Where did he get it? it be possible——"



"Never mind who I am!"

Charles cut his reflections short, and went silently to the King's side of the palace.

Foy did not stop till she was once more in her own little chamber, where she buried her head in the pillows of her couch and wept aloud. She was soon brought to her senses by a heavy step, and looking up she was confronted by Buckingham. This man was the Queen's evil genius as every one knew, and Foy had no regard for him.

"The Duchess wants to see you forthwith," said he, and Foy felt her heart beat fast. She rose to her feet and tottered across the floor.

"One moment, girl," said the Duke. "In what manner are you mixed up in this business of the Queen's ring?"

There came to Foy's face a look of guiltiness which she could not avert.

"I did not take it!" she cried. "It was not my hand that filched the seal ring!"

"No? Well, I haven't accused you. But you know something about it."

Foy was silent. Was Buckingham seeking a club which he could hold over Lady Castlemain's head?

"I'll tell you nothing," cried Foy, with a spirit of defiance. "I will not make you my confessor."

"Prithee, you talk like a little minx," was the reply. "You don't know Buckingham."

"I seek no more knowledge of him than I already possess," said Foy. "I will go to my lady," and she went to the door with resolution on her face, and the Duke was obliged to let her out.

A few minutes later, when she emerged from Lady Castlemain's rooms, she looked as though she had aged five years. What had passed between her and her mistress is not for us to reveal.

Foy returned to her chamber and gathered up a few precious trinkets which she carefully concealed about her person, and then slipped down one of the most shaded corridors of the palace and let herself out by a private stairway. In another minute she was beyond the palace, which had been of late a prison to her soul.

The home which she had left to become the maid of honor to the King's favorite was on the hither side of the city, and she did not pause till she had passed its threshold. Never again would she be the servant of the plotter, though she knew that she was all powerful, and that it would be hard to escape her snares.

Was it true that Rosamond Temple loved Noel and had become his fiancee? She had seen Rosamond, but the gulf between them had never been bridged, yet she believed that the inmate of Temple House was a kind-hearted woman, though her rival.

Not long thereafter Rosamond heard the alarm at her door, and descending stood face to face with Foy.

"I must see you," said Foy, with bitterness, as she looked into the astonished eyes by which she was regarded.

"I know you not."

"I am Foy, the Duchess of Cleveland's maid of honor," was the reply.

Rosamond's face went indignant at the mention of the hated favorite, but it suddenly softened, and Foy was led into the parlor, the curtains of which were closely drawn.

"There should be no war between us!" cried Foy, thrusting out her hands.

"Why do you say this, girl?"

"I love Noel," came from the depths of Foy's burdened soul. "You will not spurn me for this, I trust?"

"Indeed, I will not," and Rosamond's arm went around Foy's waist, and drawing her to her side, she impressed a kiss upon her forehead. "I love Noel, too, but have you come to me to make this strange confession?"

"Not for this altogether," was the reply. "I have fled from Lady Castlemain. I am the one who carried the Queen's signet to the park, that it might be found there to her majesty's discredit."

"Have you told the King?"

"Nay, I dared not," replied Foy. "He almost had the secret from me, but I got away. They will look for Noel now."

"They have looked, but they did not find," smiled Rosamond. "He is safe."

"Aboard ship?"

"Nay; he is still in the city."

"It means the Tower for him if Lady Castlemain's minions can lay hands on him."

"I know that."

"She will rake the city as with a comb, because he brought the signet back and would not reveal where he got it."

Rosamond regarded Foy some moments in silence.

"You will not go back to Lady Castlemain?" she said.

"Not for all this world!" answered Foy, with a shudder.

"Then Temple House will shelter you, and we shall be friends, despite our rivalry for a brave man's love!" and again Foy felt two soft lips upon her cheek.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN BRASS INTERFERES.

At almost the same hour at that in which Foy La Fonde was knocking at the door of Temple House, Noel Neville stood at a casement window, in another part of London, looking out upon the scene which swept from his vision. He saw the steeple of old St. Paul's and the Tower. On the other hand he caught a glimpse of Whitehall, and far off to the left he noticed the line of the Thames.

It galled him to know that his freedom was circumscribed, that he was a hunted man, sought after by the minions of one of the most powerful women in

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the world. What had become of Rosamond was conjecture. How had she fared with the men who had come for him to Temple House, and was she still there? He longed to go out and confront Lady Castlemain, to play the best game he could against her cunning, but he deemed it not safe to venture beyond doors in open daylight.

He had taken refuge in a house which belonged to a friend whom he could trust, but he feared that, should he be discovered, it would compromise that friend and drag him to the terrors of the King's Tower. He was anxious also to learn how Harle the Hawk fared. It was not his intention to slay the highwayman, but he had been obliged to sword him in defense of his own life.

Turning from the window he began to pace the floor in rapid and anxious strides. He had sent out to learn the state of affairs, and was now waiting for news.

Presently the door opened, and a slim little man, wearing a green doublet, came in. Noel whirled upon him with a query on his tongue.

"Well, Peter!" he cried. "What is the news from the outside world?"

In reply, and with a grin, Peter took from his pocket a bit of paper which he handed to Noel.

"What!" exclaimed the master of Audrey Chase, "has some one plucked my ladybird of Whitehall?" and then he laughed.

The substance of the matter which had caught his eye was the offer of a large reward for the capture of a highwayman who had robbed the Red Duchess of her pearl necklace.

"I'll wager I could name the robber," Noel exclaimed. "The act was like one of Harle's for all the world. He's fond of plucking rich pigeons, and there's no one who would offer such a chance as the Red Duchess. Where did you get this, Peter?"

"I found it on the tables of the Lion and Stag."

"And what is the gossip there?"

"They are laughing over the robbery, and hoping that the cutpurse will present the necklace to his lady-love," grinned the little man.

"And what about Noel Neville?" queried the young man. "Do they say that Lady Castleman is hunting him?"

"I did hear your name mentioned by a swaggerer who sat over his sack at one of the tables. You may have heard of him."

"What is his name, pray?"

"Captain Jovis Brass."

A smile illumined Noel's countenance.

"My old friend the swashbuckler!" he exclaimed. "So he is still at large and there's no doubt that he will feast his eyes on the necklace one of these days."

Peter looked at Noel in some astonishment, but did not venture a question.

When the day closed, and the flambeaux threw their garish light along the thoroughfares, Noel put on his sword, and changing his usual costume for one found in his friend's wardrobe, he quietly sallied forth and made his way through the streets. Secure in his disguise, he invaded the Lion and Stag, and presently found himself at a table, looking over the habitues of the place, for the most part those of note in high circles.

It was not an unusual sight for him, but now he was compelled to keep his incognito while he kept open ear as well as observant eye. All at once there trooped into the place three men who took seats within a few feet of his table. One of these was a person with a distinguished look, but with the air of a boaster, and Noel knew him at once for the captain of the King's guard.

"You don't expect me to be outwitted by this young rascal?" he exclaimed, as he brought his hand down upon the oaken table. "I shall not only ransack his haunts for him, but I will bring him to bay by a ruse that never fails."

"You never fail, as we know," responded one of the others. "But what is the bait, Captain?"

"Every man has a love," quoth the guardsman. "Let him know that we have caught his bird, and he will be at the door of the cage in a jiffy."

"God's mercy! but it's a good plan," was the answer. "When will you catch the pretty bird?"

"Before daybreak. That will bring Master Neville out of hiding."

Noel's heart went into his throat, and he gazed at the captain of the guard as his hand moved toward his sword. He knew what was about to happen. Rosamond was to be arrested in the hope of bringing him into the open, and he bit his lip when he thought of the scheme.

Once in the hands of Lady Castlemain, Rosamond would be hurried to the Tower, and the iron doors of that famous prison would close upon her, with no hope of escape without the leniency of the Red Duchess, and when was she lenient to those whom she hated?

He rose from the table, when he suddenly caught the eye of the captain of the guard.

"Ho, friend!" cried that worthy. "Come and join us in a pint of sack. You look like a good fellow, and one who picks up the gossip of the street. A chair for our friend, Hubert."

Noel saw the eyes of the trio fixed upon him, and in a flash realized the situation.

"Some other time," he answered, with a gesture of thanks. "I have other business just now."

The burly captain of the guard was insistent. He had tarried long at the wine, and his face was flushed and his eyes heavy. He sprang to his feet and seized Noel's arm.

"You shall not refuse us your company," he sang out. "It is not every night that you have a chance to touch mugs with Louis Pawn, captain of the palace guard!"

Noel's face flushed when he found himself in the grip of the swaggerer who was dragging him forward as a butcher drags a bullock to the block. He felt every drop of blood surge to his brain.

"Have a care!" he cried, through his teeth.

"By my soul! you shall not refuse us!" vociferated the giant. "I fancy you might be Noel Neville, the bird that has eluded me."

Whether this was mere guesswork or recognition Noel could not say. He longed to give the fellow the point of his blade, but instead he thought of a milder action. His right arm was free, and all at once he sent his hand squarely into the ruffian's face.

There was a wild cry as the captain of the guard staggered under the blow. The table toppled over, and the next moment there was a confusion of mugs on the sawdust floor. Pawn struggled to his feet with a face as ferocious as a lion's and shouted out for his companions to secure Noel whilst he finished him with his sword.

This was not at all to Noel's liking, and when he saw all three men at him with their blades, he backed off and drew his own. The well-dressed spectators looked on in amusement, for a sword fight in the Lion and Stag was more to them than a play.

"Close the door yonder!" roared Pawn. "Don't let the varlet escape?"

The following second all three came at Noel, and their swords glinted in his face. A good adversary is enough for a man at a time, but when three attack the odds are dangerous. Noel warded off the blows with a dexterity that was amazing, but they were rained so fast and furiously that he gave ground as he set his teeth hard and tried to follow every thrust.

"Fair play, there!" suddenly roared a voice. "Give the fellow one chance for his life, you dogs!"

Down upon the scene rushed a man who had drawn his sword, and before Noel could get half a look at him he had flung himself into the melee. One thrust by the ally sent one of the trio back over the fallen table with a blade through his shoulder, and at the same time Noel winged another, leaving the captain of the guard to continue the combat single-handed if he would.

By this time the whole place was in an uproar. A tall man in a laced doublet, from the bosom of which hung a ducal seal, sprang forward and commanded peace.

"What yould you do, Captain Pawn," he cried.

"I'd wing this bird," cried the captain of the guard. "By my troth! Duke, he looks like Neville of Audrey Chase."

The laced man was Buckingham.

"Do you deny the charge?" he asked covering Noel with his finger, as his white face changed to a livid hue. "Guard the door there. I am Lord Buckingham!"

Noel already felt the door of the Tower close upon him. But at that moment he was seized by the man who had rushed to his assistance, and before any one could interfere he was hustled across the floor and almost thrown into the street.

"Now go, and thank Jovis Brass!" said a voice behind him.

CHAPTER XI.

IN BEAUCHAMP TOWER.

Noel did not come into the full realization of his adventure till he was back in the house of his friend in Holborn Square. Then he saw how foolish he had been to venture beyond the precincts of the Lion and Stag, for he had been recognized by his enemies, and besides Buckingham would now rake London for him. Moreover, Rosamond was in great danger, for he had heard Captain Pawn say that they intended to arrest the girl in hopes of bringing him (Noel) out of hiding.

He paced the floor of the upper room, chafing like a lion in confinement. Meantime the excitement over his escape had subsided but little at the coffee house. Captain Brass, after getting Noel away, had made himself scarce, for he did not care to incur the ire of Buckingham, who was almost as powerful as the King.

The Duke raved over Noel's escape, and uttered all sorts of threats, roaring like a bull of Bashan, after his manner whenever he was heated with wine. Captain Pawn and his guardsmen returned after a brief search for Noel and joined in the furore.

"We will catch the pretty bird, at any rate," he bellowed. "We shall cage her and let her beat her feathers out within the Tower!"

Away trooped the swaggerers, and soon reached the front of Temple House. Rosamond and Foy heard them thundering at the portal.

When Noel's sweetheart opened the door for a look at the posse, they lunged against it, broke the chain, and rushed inside. The two girls were taken unawares, and before Rosamond could de-

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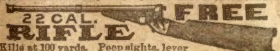

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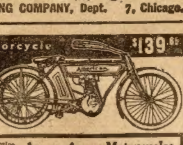
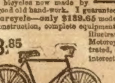
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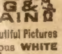
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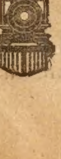
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mand their mission, several hands seized her, and she was held as in a grip of steel.

Foy knew Captain Pawn at once, and fearing that she, too, was to be dragged forth, she made her escape and vanished into the night.

The royal warrant was thrust into Rosamond's face and she was taken away.

"What is the charge?" she asked, looking into the merciless eyes of the captain of the guard.

"Charge enough, as you shall see," was the gruff reply. "Is it not enough to aid those whom the King wants?"

The girl did not reply to this, but kept silent till she heard the door of Beauchamp Tower close behind her, when she gave vent to her feelings.

She was within the dreaded Tower of which she had heard so much and from which some of the most illustrious men and women of England had gone forth to doom. Her room was small, but rather well furnished. There was a bed, a little writing table, and a chair. A lamp fastened to the wall gave light enough, but for all this she was disconsolate, for she feared that Noel would be hunted down and brought to the same terrible place.

What would he think when he should learn of her predicament? Would he essay to aid her, and by this means bring himself into the light and fall into the hands of his enemies?

After securing Rosamond in the Tower, Captain Pawn swaggered into the presence of Lady Castlemain to report. He found the favorite playing with her Pomeranian, but she dropped the dog the moment she set eyes on her emissary.

"We have caged the bird, your grace!" said the Captain, with a profound genuflection. "We laid hands on her in the nest, and she is now recreating in Beauchamp Tower."

"Good!" cried the Red Duchess. "Think you this will bring Noel Neville into the open?"

"It undoubtedly will," was the answer, and Pawn did not see fit to acknowledge that Noel himself had escaped from him at the Lion and Stag.

When he went away, having been rewarded with a lot of gold sovereigns, with a few for his helpers, Lady Castlemain rejoiced over her victory. She was in the midst of this when the King entered. There was a frown on Charles' swarthy face.

"I shall soon be on the track of the mystery connected with the loss of the Queen's signet," said he.

"Ah, that is well," returned Lady Castlemain, dissembling.

"Her majesty is certain that she could not have lost the ring without the palace."

There was no reply to this speech.

"I shall find and question Noel Neville," continued the King. "He would not tell her majesty where he got the signet, but he will not remain silent before me."

There was the semblance of a threat in the monarch's tones. Lady Arabella's heart fluttered with fear. If Noel were arrested and brought to the Tower, he would be in Charles' hands, and she would not get to wreak her vengeance upon him. The moment the King retired she sent hurriedly for Buckingham.

"Send out your netters!" she cried to that worthy. "Rake London as with a fine comb, and unearth this man Neville."

"He shall be in the Tower by tomorrow night."

"Nay, not the Tower!" exclaimed Arabella, as her face took on a pale color. "Not for the world must he pass its precincts now."

"But your grace was anxious to send him thither but a short time ago."

"Yes, but he will fall into the King's hands if taken to the Tower. Then he would tell how he found the signet, and that might absolve her majesty from all blame and restore her to the royal favor."

"Ha!" laughed Buckingham. "The butter is on the wrong side of the bread, meseems."

The King's favorite flushed.

"There are sharp daggers in London," she pursued, coming nearer to Buckingham and lowering her voice. "This man must not fall into the King's hands."

"There are dungeons in the city which are not in the Tower," suggested the unscrupulous Duke.

"I know."

"There are keeps of the existence of which the monarch himself is ignorant."

"Say you so, Duke?"

"Aye. There is the water dungeon of Princess Walk."

"Methinks I have heard of it."

"The water rises in this place and slowly engulfs the captive."

"And inflicts a lingering death?"

"Exactly."

"There may be escape even from that!" cried Lady Castlemain in a state of doubt.

"I know of no one who has escaped from the place."

"It is in your hands," she replied. "But to my notion the dagger is surer. You must be swift, Buckingham, for the King will search for Neville in order to question him himself."

"What of the man who robbed you of your necklace?" inquired the Duke.

"We will attend to him by and by. From all I can gather, it was that laced cutpurse Harle."

"A veritable plunderer!" smiled the Duke. "Ere this, perhaps, he has hung the necklace about the throat of his lady-love."

"I'll attend to both of them!" cried Arabella, stamping her foot. "I can pull a thousand strings, your grace." Once more she was alone.

In less than an hour the minions of Buckingham were scouring London for Noel. He threw out his net in every direction. He had but to order to call into requisition all the fierce man-hunters of the city. He set the trainbands in operation, and placed the secret spies of the city on the trail.

Entering Vauxhall Garden, ablaze with lights and filled with merrymakers, Buckingham took a seat at a table under a spreading tree and cast his cold gray eyes around. Suddenly they alighted upon a well-dressed young woman who sat near him. It was not her face which so attracted him, but a beautiful necklace of pearls which she wore about her swan-like throat. The Duke's eyes bulged as he studied the necklace.

"The Red Duchess' pearls, by all the saints!" he exclaimed under his breath, and forthwith rising from his seat, he promenaded to where the girl sat watching a party of maskers who were filling their immediate vicinity with song and jest.

Placing his hands on the other table, Buckingham leaned toward the girl and looked her squarely in the face. She returned his stare with a little discomposure.

"You have a fine necklace there," said the Duke. "May I ask if it did not once adorn the neck of the Duchess of Cleveland?"

"You may ask anything," was the reply, as a flush overspread the girl's face.

"I shall answer my own question," and the next moment Buckingham darted forward.

"Have a care!" cried the girl, rising and drawing back. "I will not be robbed of my present."

"Who gave it to you?"

"One who had a right to give," was the answer, and before the Duke could make reply or perform another act, the girl's glove was laid twice across his face, and when he recovered she was gone.

"Very well," he muttered, in no pleasant frame of mind. "I'll remember the face and the garb. A red bodice and a blue hat with a golden feather," and with this, smothering his chagrin, Buckingham strolled away.

CHAPTER XII.

NOEL AND THE KING.

Noel's servant, Peter, was a man who let little gossip escape him. He had a knack of picking up everything, and it was almost certain that Rosamond's incarceration in the Tower would sooner or later come under his notice.

It was not long before it did, and he hastened forthwith to the tenant of the house in Holborn Square. Noel for a moment seemed struck dumb by the intelligence. What! Rosamond in the clutches of the Red Duchess! Housed in Beauchamp Tower, and in the shadow of even more peril than that! His blood seemed to run cold through his veins. He paced the floor like a tiger, now and then giving vent to his rage, and accusing himself for not remaining outside, where he could have been of assistance to his love.

He thought of going to the King and telling him how he obtained her majesty's signet, but he feared that it would only be walking into Lady Castlemain's trap. However, he resolved that he would no longer remain cooped up like a hunted fugitive, and bidding Peter begone, he prepared to sally forth to see if he could not be of service to the menaced girl.

If he could have passed the portals of Whitehall Palace, he would have confronted the Red Duchess and openly accused her of being at the head of the plot against the Queen, for Foy had told him enough to make him more than suspect the King's favorite. Not that he feared a foe single-handed, and even with odds against him, he was amply able to take care of himself, but he did not like the idea of walking blindly into a snare.

Sword play is all well enough at times, and there was no period in court history when it was more in vogue than during the reign of Charles Stuart, for then all men carried their hearts on their sleeves, and personal combats were sought with avidity. Noel had rather a liking for these sports, but there were times when they were to be avoided, and as yet he had no desire to be numbered among the victims of a good thrust.

When he left the house, under cover of darkness and protected by a good disguise, he bent his steps towards St. James' Park, which was one of the gossiping centers of London.

He had not had time properly to thank Captain Brass for his lucky interference at the Lion and Stag, but he knew that that worthy frequented pleasure spots of the city, and he thought he might fall in with him at St. James'. He reached the pleasure ground when merrymaking was at its height, and selecting a secluded spot, sat down to observe the crowds.

All the time he had his eye open for two persons—Jovis Brass and Captain Pawn of the King's guard. The ladies in

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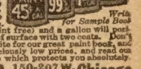
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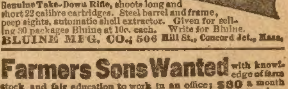
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Don't wait any longer; learn to labor now.

It takes a lazy man to make good as a loafer.

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How dearly we pay for the things we get for nothing!

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Fools try to convince a woman; wise men persuade her.

The sharp business man is always prepared for dull times.

When a man loses his temper he certainly doesn't look it.

And occasionally a man is married for his first wife's money.

He is truly a great man who can lose his money and still retain his friends.

A rolling stone gathers no moss—and a man who is going down hill gathers no coin.

Most of us are charitable when it comes to giving away other people's money.

Sooner or later you will hear everybody you know say something about the weather.

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their fine feathers and the lords in their best raiment interested him, and he soon lost sight of his own peril in watching them.

All at once his gaze fell upon a person whom he took to be Captain Brass, and rising, he followed him through the well-lit turnings. He was about to overhaul his quarry, when a hand was laid on his arm, and he turned to confront a person the upper part of whose face was hidden by a half-mask.

"Prithee, whither so fast, sirrah," cried the stranger, as Noel unconsciously laid his hand on the haft of his sword.

"What is it to you?" he answered, almost fiercely.

"Much or little," was the retort.

"It may be much!" challenged Noel, still in no pleasant mood.

The man he had observed was escaping, and he might not have another opportunity to overtake him. The hand did not leave his sleeve, and he jerked back only to find that he was securely held. Was this man one of his hunters?

"You cannot get rid of me," laughed the stranger. "I fancy that you are wanted in certain places."

Noel's blood went hot at this, for it was a confirmation of his fears.

"By my life! we can try it out over yonder!" he cried, nodding to a spot where the light was not so garish.

"You would not fight me?"

"If you seek combat, that I will."

The eyes that gleamed behind the mask threw a look toward the secluded spot, and a hand touched a sword. Noel had by this time taken in the full costume of the man by whom he was faced, and he saw that it was of the richest material. The great purple plume in the hat lent to it jauntiness, and the cloak, lined with white fur, betokened no mean individual. Then, the sword had in its hilttop a stone which glittered amazingly, and the silken hose terminated at the tops of boots of yellow leather.

"Why should we fight?" asked Noel.

"Because you wish it, forsooth."

The cool cleverness of the unknown startled Noel.

"Come, then!" he exclaimed, and they walked forward to the spot he had indicated by his glance.

"What brought you hither?" suddenly asked the stranger.

"Business of importance."

"A bit of love-making?"

"Nay."

"In search of adventure, then?"

"Neither that. I've had enough of such things within the last few hours."

The eyes back of the dark mask seemed to twinkle.

"Love-making or adventure, it matters little," spoke its owner. "Would you care if I guessed at your identity?"

"You might have a dozen guesses and then miss," bantered Rosamond's lover

There was a laugh at this.

"You are the Duke of Buckingham?"

"God save me from having the blood of that villain in my veins!" almost hissed Noel.

"Say you so? Then you haven't a lofty opinion of his grace?"

"Every opinion but an elevated one."

"Then, for my second venture, what if I called you Noel Neville of Audrey Chase?"

The guess thrilled Noel. He had been discovered!

"What, you do not answer!" cried the other. "The soft impeachment seems to fling you into silence."

Noel fell back and drew his sword.

"Never mind who I am," he exclaimed. "If you care to cross blades with me, you shall be accommodated to the full."

The next moment there were two good blades under the trees, and both men threw back their cloaks, so as not to impede the mettle of their sword arms.

"Art ready?" asked Noel's antagonist.

"As ready as I will ever be," was the answering retort.

"Then let us at it."

If there was no better swordsman in London than young Neville, there was at least one, as he soon discovered, who knew all the points of personal combat. Noel had learned the ethics of dueling from a past master of that dangerous art, and had been discharged as an apt pupil who could be taught no more. For a few moments the contest was one of playful give and take, but it gradually fell into earnestness, and the blades met in a real combat.

Rosamond's lover was forced to give ground before the hot thrusts of his adversary, and he shut his teeth hard as he resolved not to be beaten by the unknown. Besides this, he had a burning desire to look behind the mask, for its owner had guessed his identity, and he promised himself to reveal that face, even if the revelation cost him his life.

"Marry! but you fight well," suddenly exclaimed the stranger.

"I know a few points in swordsmanship," gayly answered Noel.

"You must have learned under old Tarleton."

"He was my tutor, sir," was the quick reply.

In another moment Noel demonstrated that he had not been taught in vain, by executing a play which tore his adversary's blade from his grasp, flinging it with a ring to the greensward. He could have followed up his success by spitting the stranger with his steel, but he did not.

He saw the unknown stoop and recover his sword, and as he rose, to Noel's surprise, the mask fluttered from his face, and he stood revealed. It was the most startling moment in his career.

"My God!" cried Noel. "'Tis the King!"

The exclamation was greeted with a smile on the handsome but swarthy face of the man before him. In all England there was not another like it. Noel sent his steel to the bottom of the scabbard and recoiled.

"Charles Stuart, at your service," said the other. "You know the penalty attached to the disarming of majesty."

Noel's heart was in his throat, and he turned to fly.

"Stay!" rang out the voice of the Merry Monarch. "It is your King's command!" and Noel stood still in his tracks.

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. Be wise and attend to this today.

⁂

Hunting a Firebug

(Continued back from page 23).

diately went in search of his friend. He did not find him.

The woods were strange to him, and he feared he might get lost if he undertook to make his way out on his own hook. Why had the settler deserted him? Till was puzzled. Then there was Billy. He could never desert him.

"I'll go back to the lake and look for Billy," soliloquized the boy. "It doesn't seem likely that the firebug tramp would dare murder him. Anyhow, he could have no motive for such a crime."

After a further search for Abraham Flight without results, Till went to where a smothered bonfire gave forth flashes of dying light, selected a burning pine knot, and with this for a torch to guide him, set out to retrace his steps.

Till had just entered the gully when a gun cracked and a bullet tore his torch from him hand. Following the shot came a most hideous laugh. Till dodged behind a blackened tree-trunk just as a second shot awoke the echoes of the smoking forest.

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

⁂

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"Madam," said the gentlemanly agent, "I am selling a collection of the greatest poems ever written. The book is finely bound, containing 697 pages, and——"

"I don't care for poetry. You will have to excuse me."

"In that case, ma'am, perhaps you would like to see a Bible that I am selling. It contains a handy index which will enable you to find any name or quotation without——"

"No, we have all the Bibles we want. Really, I am very busy."

"If you are interested in art, I can furnish you with replicas of all the old masters, so cleverly done that no one would be able to——"

"We have all the art we want, I must ask you to step outside at once."

"Won't you let me show you a collection of the world's prose masterpieces? It is the most handsome volume——"

"No, I don't care to be bothered any further. Good day."

"I am handling a lotion that is guaranteed to remove wrinkles in one night. It is recommended by——"

"Just step in and be seated, won't you, please? Do you carry a supply with you for immediate delivery?"

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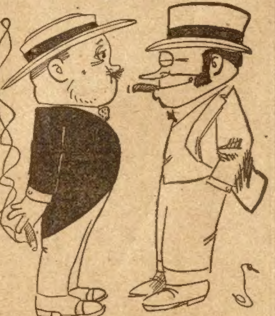

"Is Poorly carrying much life insurance?

"Well, no; he's what you might call dragging it."

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A LOVE THAT LIVED;

Or, JOAN MARQUAND'S FAITH

By AGNES DOROTHY CAMP

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Begun in No. 2, Jan. 13. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER VI.

JOAN IN THE TRAP.

THE shrill cries of children at play, girls with roller skates and skipping ropes, boys with whip tops and marbles, re-echoed through the dingy street. The only exemption from the sordid tedium of tenement houses was furnished by a large double apartment with some pretensions to style—if imitation marble and cheap brass trimmings, with two large electric lamps standing like sentinels before the door, may be termed style, and the garish advertisement of the butcher store at the corner, announcing special attractions for the morrow. Joan took the letter from the front of her dress.

Yes, this was the place, 47 Diamond street. But she wondered why such an unsavory thoroughfare should have a name that was suggestive of affluence and purity. As if to accentuate the contrast, "49" was next door to the pretentious-looking house. But instead of the sentinel lights a stolid wooden figure of an Indian graced the entrance, and the ground floor was occupied by a cigar man whose family lived back of the store.

With considerable misgivings Joan entered the vestibule. There were several names written in pencil and chalk on the wall at the end of a row of names. Nearest the inside door was a grimy card with "Lester, top floor" written upon it. Somewhat reassured, she started to climb the four flights of stairs, wondering as she did so how the punctilious, immaculate Roy could live and work in such an environment. The foul odors of bad cooking emitted from the rooms, the dirty, poverty-stricken children squalling on the stairs, and the thin, scantily clad women peering out of the doors, made the girl quicken her steps. But with all these evidences of low-minded degradation, not a second did Joan's faith in Roy waver. Yet her heart beat wildly as she knocked timidly at the door on the top floor, where she saw another smudgy card tacked up.

The door was opened immediately by a good-looking, flashily dressed woman, a striking contrast to anything Joan had seen on the stairs.

"I want to see Mr. Lester," said the girl, bravely, feeling at the same time as though she were going to faint.

"Come in," replied the other woman, quickly.

Joan entered and hastily glanced around. Not swiftly enough, however, to see Rex' wife lock the door and put the key into her pocket. The visitor was taken to the room in the front of the apartment, and again Joan expressed a desire to see Mr. Lester. Rex had disappeared in the bedroom. It was agreed between the plotters that a glimpse of him would be fatal to the scheme, as the girl would immediately see the extraordinary likeness to the artist.

"Mr. Lester is out," replied the woman, decisively, at the same time fixing the girl with those intense black eyes.

"I thought he was very ill; that was why I came," faltered Joan.

"He is very ill," said Mrs. Lester, evasively. "You are to see him later. In the meantime it is his wish that you remain quietly here until he is well enough to send for and see you."

Joan looked inquiringly at the woman. "Does Mr. Lester live here? And who are you?" she asked, sweetly. "He has never mentioned you to me. I am Joan Marquand. We are engaged to be married, but," she added with a sigh, "there is an unfortunate misunderstanding, which I hope will be cleared up some day. But I would not allow that to keep me away when he is ill."

"Only a misunderstanding, eh?" repeated the other woman, meaningly.

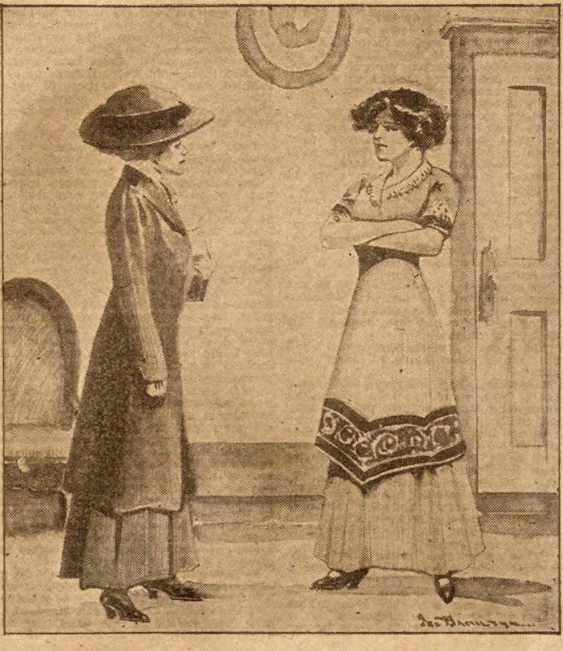
"I trust that is all. Has he spoken to you about it?" questioned Joan, anxiously.

"Oh, no!" laughed Mrs. Lester. "I am not in his confidence to that extent."

"Cannot you tell me about Mr. Lester's illness, and how soon I may expect to hear from him," begged Joan. "I must go out and telephone my father. He will expect me back at the time I told him I would return," she went on rapidly.

"You had better not go out," said Mrs. Lester, slowly. "Roy might send for you at any moment. Just write down the message and the telephone number, and I will take it out for you."

Joan heartily disliked the woman, but unsuspicious of guile, she hastily took pencil and paper from her handbag, and carefully wrote the message to her father, wording it so that it could easily be transmitted.



"I want to see Mr. Lester."

"There, if you will look after it I will wait as patiently as I am able until Mr. Lester sends for me," she said, pleasantly. "But will you not tell me first how it is that I am asked to come if Mr. Lester is not here? I can bear anything but suspense."

"You will know all about him in a few minutes," answered the woman, taking the slip of paper from the girl's hand, and hurrying from the room. Again Joan failed to hear the key turn in the lock.

Rex' wife found him crouched in the little bedroom, straining his ears to catch a word or two from the women. He looked up anxiously.

"You need have no regret for the trick you played on the girl. She cares just as much as ever for your brother. And Martell will have his work cut out to win her, or I miss my guess," said his wife, tearing up the paper Joan had given her.

Meanwhile the girl paced nervously up and down the little shabby room.

"What does it all mean?" she asked herself over and over. One thing she felt quite sure of—Roy did not live in this abominable place, and she was equally certain that he did not know that she was there. At last a light seemed to dawn. There had been an accident; he was in a near-by hospital, unconscious, or perhaps, undergoing some dangerous operation. This woman was probably a servant, and Joan shuddered at the thought of her. And she no doubt was instructed to take her to Roy as soon as he was allowed to see her.

The girl wrung her hands with anxiety. She would give the woman time to send the message to her father, and then insist upon knowing the truth. At this point in her cogitations a loud, roaring, grating noise in the street below attracted her attention, and she hurried to the window. Standing right opposite the house was a large limousine wheezing and grunting asthmatically. In the interval while Joan was marveling at so much prosperity in such a dreary neighborhood, Martell was hurrying up the four flights of stairs. It was evidently his first visit, for he peered around for the right door, until his eye lighted on the dirty card that had guided Joan.

"I wish I had known that Lester lived in a den like this" he muttered, disgustedly. "What must Joan think of it?"

He knocked softly, wondering as he did so what the girl would say to his stratagem. But Martell was too egotistical to feel any alarm for the success of his coup. "All I need," he reflected, "is opportunity."

The surprises, however, were not all for Joan that day. A moment later the door was opened, and Martell stood face to face with an old acquaintance, a person he would have given half his fortune not to meet. Rex' wife, after an attempt at fixing up, looked about the same as when Martell had seen her five years before."

"Genette St. Clair!" he gasped.

"Gilbert Ainslee!" she whispered, faintly. "I thought you dead."

"Gilbert Ainslee is dead, and Gerald Martell is glad to know Mrs. Lester," he said, meaningly.

"But how about your wife?" she demanded, fixing him with her piercing black eyes.

"Oh, don't be a fool, Genette! That marriage was a fake. Besides, Ethel got awfully tired and was very glad to get rid of me."

Genette knew that in both instances the man lied, and her wits were working against time to circumvent him.

"So Ethel got tired?" she said, with an uneasy laugh. And her mind went back six years to the time when Gilbert Ainslee, as he called himself, a handsome youth just out of college used to wait at the stage door every night for Ethel Bentley, a pretty littl orphan, then playing a minor part in the same company with Genette. When Genette was leaving the city for a long tour, she had urged the girl to marry, because the young man seemed so earnest; the woman disliked leaving her little friend alone.

Her features contracted disagreeably as she thought of her return to the city a year later, to find her friend recovering from a long illness, besides nursing a sickly baby, and mourning pathetically the death of her husband. Martell watched the woman's face anxiously. He knew it was in her power to make or mar his happiness, and he realized that his future peace of mind rested with Joan. He was willing to risk everything to win her; with him it was no longer revenge; it was what he selfishly called "love."

"Come, Genette, let us forget the past," he said, presently, with a mirthless laugh. "We can be of infinite assistance to each other at this time." Glancing around the shabby quarters, and at the woman's feeble attempt at finery, he added: "You are not living here from choice." And he wondered how this woman, fond of pretty things and lots of excitement, had fallen a prey to the shiftless Lester. Again their eyes met. "Tell me more about Ethel?" she asked in a noncommittal tone.

"Oh, nothing but the old story. Ethel grew tired of me; met another fellow; married, and is doing well somewhere out West."

"But what made her think you were dead?" she asked, watching the man's face anxiously.

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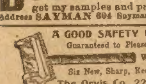

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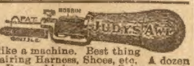

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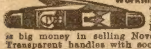

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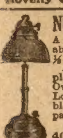

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and sent word that I was dead. It set her free, which was my sole object."

"You lying villain!" thought the woman, as the factory whistle in the neighborhood announced the noon hour, and she knew that Ethel was in line with the toilers taking her hour of respite from the maddening humming and buzzing of the machinery. The poor child's illness had destroyed the sweet voice, her only stage asset, and there was nothing left but the factory.

"Well, that was real thoughtful of you," she said, with a grating laugh. "Now, what are you up to?"

"I haven't settled down yet," he replied. "But with such a faithful ally as yourself, I hope to soon; and now, my dear Genette, have pity on a lover's impatience, and tell me about her," nodding in the direction of the room where Joan was waiting.

Genette drew him into the little room where Lester was waiting and wondering what devilish plot the two were scheming, but perfectly willing to shift the responsibility onto his wife.

Martell explained the next move in his plan, in case the girl proved inaccessible. He thought he had the worthy couple in his clutches, and they would be ready tools to his hand. So with a great deal of assurance he started to see Joan. The moment his back was turned, Lester's wife whispered hurriedly to her husband:

"Go at once to your brother. Make any terms with him, and say that we shall leave New York this afternoon!"

"But how?" asked her husband, his mind in confusion.

"'Go quickly and do just what I tell you. Then come back at once," she panted.

Meanwhile, Joan had stood with bated breath. She could not help associating the touring car with Roy. She felt sure that she was right. There had been an accident, and the woman had withheld information to spare Joan. Ah, she saw it all now! Imagine then, her surprise when the door opened and Martell entered. He approached the girl smilingly and with outstretched hands. Instantly her fears returned, and she suspected something—she hardly knew what. With a supreme effort she nerved herself to meet the new ordeal.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Martell?" she asked, coldly, without a quaver in her voice.

"I am here on your own account," he said, fixing her with his eyes, which seemed to her like sword points.

"You take too much interest in my welfare," she exclaimed with extreme annoyance.

"My dearest Joan," Martell began.

She drew her breath sharply. One hand was clasped tightly over the back of a chair; she raised the other.

"Stop!" she commanded. "Call in the woman from the next room." He hesitated, and Joan stepped toward the door. But with a quick movement he stood before her. "Now listen a moment, Joan," he said, quietly. "Then if you wish to call the woman you may do so."

Joan felt her head reel; she wanted to cry out. It was with difficulty she controlled herself.

"What do you wish to say?" she asked, coldly.

"You expected and wished to see the artist," he replied. "But you are the last person he would see just now. In fact, your presence would cause him great inconvenience," he added, with an uncomfortable smile.

"I am the best judge. Where is Mr. Lester?" she demanded.

He came as close as the chair she kept carefully between them would permit.

"In prison," he answered, mysteriously.

Joan stood rooted to the spot, but not the quiver of an eyelid betrayed to her tormentor the agitation of the girl.

"Go on; that is not all you came here to say," she said, imperatively.

Martell was nonplused. Instead of the weeping, clinging girl he expected to find, here was a proud, haughty miss, the kind "that is hard to handle," he muttered. And he felt no scruples in humbling her pride.

"Your hero," he said, "is cooling his artistic temperament in a prison for the very inartistic crime of burglary. Although he seems to be an accomplished hand at the business, at present there is no witness to past offenses. As I have influence with the judge before whom he will be tried, it remains with you whether he is released or sent to Sing Sing for a long stay."

"You are cruel, vindictive, and revengeful!" she cried. "What are your terms?"

"Ah, Joan," he protested, "don't put it like that. I want you to love me, dear, just the way I love you. I am willing to sacrifice everything for you, but don't make me feel like a villain and a ruffian, for winning you by force. I can get Lester off with one word. But on the other hand, if I withhold it, and insist upon your appearing as a witness to a former burglary, it will mean many years in a cage for your bird of plumage. Hatred is akin to love, and I will go all lengths to win you," he cried, disperately.

But never for a moment had Joan felt afraid. Her proud strength and self-reliance so enraged the man, that without waiting for her answer he kicked away the chair that separated them, and clasped the girl in a mad embrace.

It was then that Joan had screamed: "Roy, Roy! Come quick! Help, help!"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. MARQUAND'S DISCOVERY.

A woman is supposed to be guided by intuition, a dog by instinct. But what sentiment prompted Mr. Marquand, after walking three miles on the morning of Joan's flight, to retrace his steps? Entering the cottage half an hour after the girl had left, he told himself that he was restless and afraid she would be lonely. But surely an all-wise Providence was guiding the old man. The reading of the telegram and the girl's note was the work of a moment. Grim determination showed in the old man's face as he hurried to Roy Lester's cottage to obtain the young man's city address. Mrs. Blake received the musician with her usual beaming smile.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Marquand?" she asked. "Mr. Lester is not home, but he will be here tomorrow. I have just received a letter from him."

Mr. Marquand asked for Roy's address and hurried away, feeling sure that the letter to Mrs. Blake was part of the deception. The old man had missed two trains, and Joan had three hours' start. But he got on the next train, and a taxi brought him to Roy's studio much earlier that he believed possible. The elevator shot him to the top floor. As the musician was about to place his finger on the bell button of Roy's apartment, the door opened suddenly and a man emerged. The old musician was startled at the sight. The person was like Lester and still not the same. He decided quickly.

"Mr. Lester?" he asked.

"Mr. Lester is inside," grumbled the man, motioning to the room, and starting again for the elevator. But the old man was too quick for him. He grabbed the stranger by the collar and dragged him into the studio. The man squirmed. He seemed to be all nerve and muscle, and could no doubt have got away easily enough. But the sardonic grin showed a malignant delight in the older man's mistake. Mr. Marquand was startled at the sound of Roy's voice from the darkened room as the artist approached the door and asked the meaning of the disturbance.

In his astonishment the old man let go of the man's collar, and Rex—for it was he—hurried away as quickly as possible.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Marquand," said Roy, extending his hand in his usual graceful, easy style, and without the slightest embarrassment. The older man hesitated, and a thousand thoughts surged through his brain.

"Who is that man?" he asked, excitedly. And without waiting for an answer: "Where is Joan?"

Roy felt more than a little resentful toward this testy old man who had treated him to an exhibition of temper and hard words that only his age saved him from giving an account of. And though the young man loved Joan devotedly and was willing to make any explanation considered necessary, he saw no reason why he should air his family skeleton to her irritable father, unless it was to bring him nearer to an understanding. So he made no answer to Mr. Marquand's question regarding his brother; but at the mention of Joan he started violently.

"What do you mean?" he cried.

Mr. Marquand's better judgment was struggling with his suspicions, as he looked into the anxious eyes of the artist. He handed the telegram and Joan's note to the young man. "Can you explain that?" he demanded.

Roy read it with speechless amazement. He could think of no answer to this new phase of the mystery. The old man was watching him intently, and wondering about the stranger he had just seen in the hall. Presently the artist looked up and met the penetrating glance of the musician.

"I hope you believe me, Mr. Marquand," he said, "when I say that I not only know nothing about this, but I cannot think of any one who could have any motive for undermining me in your estimation. Will you tell me all you know about this," he added gently, "and I will proceed at once to investigate."

The anxious father then related the events of the night before; the letter; Joan's anxiety; how he had left her in the morning, and returned later to find the letter and telegram, while the girl was gone. Roy tried to conceal his real distress and agitation from the old man, and cheered him up as well as possible. While he tried to map out the best course to pursue in a search for the girl, he sat for a while with his head between his hands, thinking deeply. Finally he looked up, and once more found the musician watching him keenly.

"Will you tell me, Mr. Marquand, why you were so unreasonably angry with me the last day I saw you?" he asked, slowly. "I realize it was great assumption on my part to think that I am half worthy of Joan, but you had given your consent to our engagement; and we had parted the night before, for all I knew, on excellent terms. And the next morning when I called, unconscious of having caused you or Joan offense, you assailed me with a lot of angry, disjointed epithets, for which you refused any explanation."

Mr. Marquand looked long and earn-

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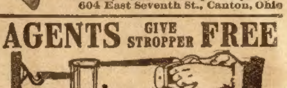

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estly at the grave face of the artist. "Was it possible," he thought, "that the girl was right, and this man was innocent? But he had confessed." The musician remembered the words distinctly: "Do not shoot; it is I, Roy." So in trembling voice the old man told him about the never-to-be-forgotten night. Roy sprang out of his seat and paced the floor excitedly. There was no slouch in his movements now. He saw, too, that this was no time for secrets. So he told his companion that the man he had met coming in was his ne'er-do-well brother, and that, for some fiendish reason, known only to himself, he had perpetrated this devilish deception. The striking resemblance made it easy to believe, so the poor old man apologized with a quaver in his voice. And once more they prepared to search for Joan.

Roy had his hat on, and was getting ready to hasten to his brother's quarters, when the telephone rang. He hurriedly took up the receiver.

"Yes; this is Mr. Lester," he said. "No; he is not," very sharply. "Yes, he has been here, and when he returns, tell him to come right back to me. Eh, what's that? What do you mean? All right, I will be there in a few minutes. What number? 47 Diamond, you say? Thank you. Good-by."

Roy hung up the receiver with a click, and turned to Mr. Marquand, who was watching him anxiously. "Come quickly," said Roy. "I have news about Joan." And the two men hurried to Rex's house.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROY TO THE RESCUE.

Joan called as if she had known that Roy was in the next room. At the same moment Roy Lester stepped inside, just in time to see the girl struggling to free herself from the mad embrace of her unwelcome wooer. In an instant he seized Martell by the collar and landed him on the floor, where the fellow fell sprawling at the feet of Mr. Marquand, who promptly sat down upon him until Roy gave him permission to rise.

"How dare you lay a finger on this girl?" demanded Roy Lester, as he stepped to the side of Joan and put a strong arm about her as she stood white and frightened in the doorway.

Martell scrambled to his feet, looking crestfallen and abashed. "Everything is fair in love and war," he muttered, sheepishly.

"So that's why you die and come to life again, at your convenience?"

Every one started at the voice. The newcomer stood looking imploringly at Martell.

"Etnel, you here?" he shouted. "Trapped by that devilish Genette, I warrant!" he growled. "I suppose she sent for you too," he added, glancing at Mr. Marquand and Roy Lester.

"Who is this lady?" demanded Roy.

"That is my affair," answered Martell, insultingly, preparing to leave the room.

"You seemed to be taking an unusual interest in my affairs a few minutes ago," declared Roy.

Mr. Marquand moved to the door and blocked the way. Roy followed before Martell could pass. Ethel stood with downcast face and trembled in silence. Joan took the woman's hand.

"What is it?" she asked, sweetly, instantly gaining the confidence of the other woman.

"He is my husband," faltered Ethel, "and the father of my little girl. He deserted me five years ago, and they wrote me that he was dead."

This was too much for the warm-hearted Marquand, and he gave vent to his feelings in a way with which the reader is already familiar. But the withering scorn addressed to Roy on another occasion was nothing compared to the fierceness of his attack on Martell.

"And now, young man," he concluded, "you shall take this woman home with you and acknowledge her to your father and all the world, or I will advertise it, and all your rascally tricks attempted on my daughter and future son-in-law."

"What in the name of infernal mischief brought you here?" sputtered Martell, once more addressing Ethel. The poor woman was shaking nervously.

"I didn't know, Gilbert," she pleaded. "Genette sent for me, and I only learned that you were here when I met Genette and Rex at the door."

"Where are they?" asked Roy, suddenly remembering there was a reckoning due himself with Rex. But the "worthy" couple had disappeared and no one mentioned in this story ever saw them again. Roy sent them the allowance agreed upon for years, and they all felt lenient toward the erring pair, because Genette had come out strong at the last, and refused to aid Martell in his rascally plot.

"Well, young man," blurted out the musician, blocking the door to keep Martell in. "What are you going to do?"

"She may go with me, if she wants to," grumbled the defeated rascal. "But I don't promise that she will stay with me. Come along, Ethel."

"Remember, my dear," said the old man, addressing Ethel, "I shall see that you are righted, in sight of the law, if need be."

Martell, without a glance at Roy or Joan, hurried from the house.

CHAPTER IX.

Two months later society was chagrined when a fashionable newspaper announced the marriage of the popular and dashing Gerald Martell to the charming but suspiciously unknown young widow, Mrs. Ethel Ainslee. And by a strange coincidence the same paper on the same day, after a long, flattering notice of the successful and rapidly rising young artist, Roy Lester, went on to speak of his approaching nuptials with the pretty daughter of Justine Marquand, for many years affiliated with the L—— Theater.

It was the day before Joan's wedding, and the company from the city arrived at Bornton. Lester's cottage was full to overflowing, and Joan declared that if the weather were not so cold she would pin some of them on the clothesline. The Marquand house was creaking, and the rickety floor groaned with the unusual strain, but every one was happy, and the preparations under the able hands of Mrs. Blake and Jean's aunt went along merrily.

Roy and Joan had just come from the little church where the evergreen decorations were being put in place by the Sunday School children, with whom Joan was very popular. The couple walked a few minutes on the veranda before entering the house. They were both thinking of the obstacles that had appeared in the course of their true love.

"Tell me, dear one," whispered Roy, "how it was possible for you to have faith in me, in the face of such convincing proofs of my guilt?"

"Because I love you," she said, softly, looking into the grave eyes that had been everything to the girl long before Roy found the paper on which both their names were written. "But there was one other way, Roy, dear," she said, shyly, "by which I was convinced of your innocence; and it was not love."

"What was it, sweetheart," he said, eagerly, holding the girl tightly to his heart.

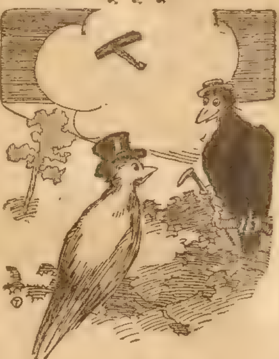
"That other man walked briskly, and I always loved and admired your comfortable gait."

"You sweetest darling," he murmured. "My walk has been called a 'slouch,' but the slouch saved me, and God willing, I will 'slouch' through the rest of my life with my dear little Joan tripping lightly by my side."

He bent and kissed her, and their eyes met like jewels in which gleamed the glory of their love and trust.

The end.

* * *



First Bird—I wonder why they have all these experiments in airships in the summer.

Second Bird—I suppose because it is fly time

* * *

Here's consolation for the married man: When the suffragettes gain their point and an election doesn't go his way, he can blame it on his wife.

* * *

When a woman is away for the summer she expects her husband to sit on the piazza at home and howl like a dog every night because he is lonesome.

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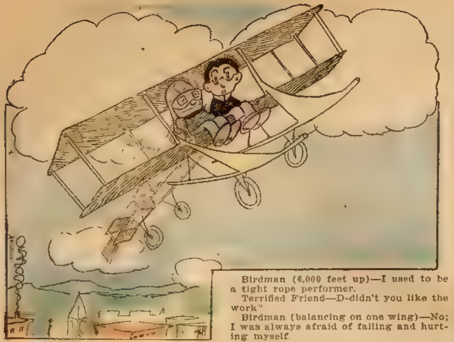


Birdman (6,000 feet up)—I used to be a tight rope performer.

Terrified Friend—D-didn't you like the work?

Birdman (balancing on one wing)—No; I was always afraid of falling and hurting myself.

Refused to See the Joke.

"I shall discharge our butler," said Mr. Cumrox

"What's the trouble?

"He doesn't show me proper deference. When I am paying a man liberally I consider it his duty to laugh at my jokes."

"And won't he?

"I don't think he can. He's an English butler. When in a spirit of gentle and condescending badinage I said to him, 'Hawkins, can you tell me which came first, the chicken or the egg?' he said: 'Which did you order first, sir?'"

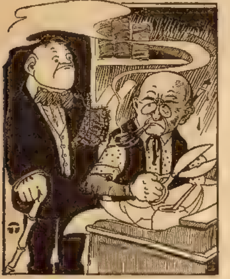
Had Noticed It.

Mr. Richfello—Isn't Miss De Mure pretty when she blushes?

Miss Beauti—Yes. I noticed it the other day. It was the first time I ever saw her face color.

"Indeed. What was she blushing over?'

"Over a plate of hot soup."



The Caller—The copy your reporter sent in said that I presented a natty appearance.

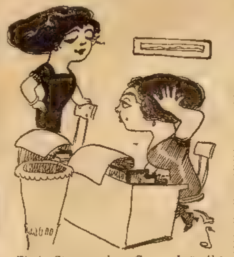
The Explanation Editor—Yes?

The Caller—And you made it read "The groom, in his new English walking suit, presented a nutty appearance."

Patient Waiting No Loss.

Mrs. Hardhead—The Daily Sweepem is offering a cyclopedia, ten volumes of poetry, and an atlas four feet square, as a premium to every subscriber.

Mr. Hardhead—We've got books enough now. Wait till they offer a horse and buggy



First Stenographer—Grace has the grandest position.

Second Stenographer—She has.

First Stenographer—Yes; the boss can't spell.

Worse Than Novels.

Father (impatiently)—Where is your mother?

Little Pet—Upstairs reading

"Huh! Reading novels, I suppose, when she ought to be——"

"No. She's readin' a perfumed letter she found in your inside vest pocket."

"H'm! Tell her I've gone out to buy her some new novels."

The Tramp's Revenge.

Sour-faced Woman—You get right out of here or I'll call my husband!

Tramp—Y'r husband ain't at home

Sour-faced Woman—How do you know he ain't?

Tramp—I've ailers heard mum, that when a man is married to a woman wot looks like you, he never is at home except at meal time.

Their First Chance.

"That newest cook we've got seems to be satisfied," announced Mrs. Hiram Weekleigh proudly.

"Has she made up her mind to stay with us?

"She has"

"Discharge her at once."

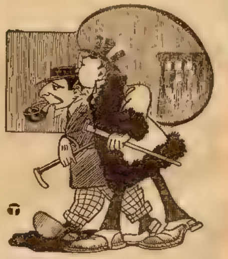
"Hiram! Just when we've got one at last who——"

"Yes. We've had a dozen cooks in as many weeks, and we've never had a chance to fire one yet. Go on—I want to see how it feels."

A Neuter Gender.

Mrs. De Sour (angrily)—I want you to keep your dog out of my house; Mrs De Smart. It's full of fleas.

Mrs. De Smart—Mercy on me! Fido! Come here, sir! Don't you go into that house again. It's full of fleas



Georgia Lotusblossom—Don't you think Esther's papa is awfully wuff?

Orville Orchid—Indeed, no. He kicked me down the stairs one night when he could just as well have thrown me over the banister.

Good Political Prospects.

The Smith's first baby had come. He had been in the world ten months. They had christened him John, and they called him "Johnnie" for long. There never was such a baby.

"How wonderful!" murmured Mr. Smith in hushed tones.

"He is a genius! cried Mrs. Smith. "I feel it!"

"He will become an inventor," said Mr. Smith, "for his originality is unparalleled!"

"Or an actor," sighed Mrs. Smith. "He is so beautiful!"

"Or a musician," hazarded Mr. Smith, "for his voice reminds me strangely of the music of Strauss

"Or a soldier," said Mrs. Smith. "He is so active''

"Or a great politician," exclaimed Mr. Smith.

"Why a politician?" queried his good wife

"Because, my dear," answered Mr Smith reverently, "he crawls out of everything so easily '

Misplaced.

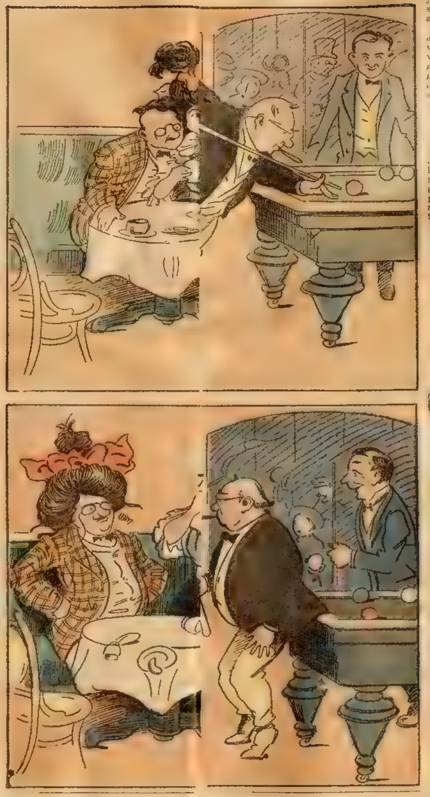
"Fred queered himself with Mayme when he tried to pay her a compliment on her hands, of whose smallness she is very proud."

"What did he say?"

"She led the conversation adroitly as usual to the subject of little hands, and he told her that hers were simply great."

CHGER

WISED.



All Good Money.

Friend—I hear you have met misfortune

Bobbson (sadly)—Indeed I have. five hundred dollars, cash and bo negotiable bonds, too—good as every one of them. It's a terrible

Friend—But I hear your wife el with another man

Bobbson—Yes' but she's the one took the money.

Likely Enough.

"Jobsly brags that he is a self-made man"

"I thought he was a little baggy at the knees."

Medical Degree.

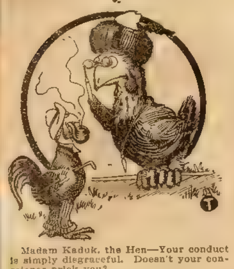
The three degrees in medical treatment: Positive, ill, comparative, pill.; superlative, bill.

More Important.

A passenger who had escaped uninjured from a serious railway smash, seeing a fellow traveler searching anxiously among the wreckage with a lantern offered to assist in the search, and, thinking the old man had lost his wife, he asked: "What part of the train was she in?" Raising his lantern and glaring at the kindly disposed passenger the old man shouted with indignant [illegible] that triumphed over physical infirmity: "She, sir! She! I am looking for my teeth!"

A Hot One.

A Scotch divine took one of his parishioners to task for his non-attendance at church. The man said: "I dinna like lang sermons." The parson with some wrath replied: "John, ye'll dee, and go to a place where ye'll not have the privilege of hearing lang or short sermons." "That may be," said John, "but it winna be for lack of parsons."



Madam Kaduk, the Hen—Your conduct is simply disgraceful. Doesn't your conscience prick you?

Chanticleer, Jr—Mebbe it's my conscience, but I always thought it was my pinfeathers

Wonder.

Ellis—The gentleman who lodges above appears to be very attentive to you

Bella—Ah, yes; I am even engaged to him. But yet I am tortured with doubt. Would that I knew whether he loves me for myself alone.

Ella—But why in the world should he marry you otherwise?

Bella—Well, to tell the truth, he owes my mother six months' rent.

Better Than Most.

Visitor—And where's the gardener who used to work here?

Gardener—Dead, sir.

Visitor—Dead! Joined the great majority, eh?

Gardener—Well, sir, I wouldn't like to say that. He was a good enough man as far as I know

American Tips Too Large.

Frenchman—Vat you gif zat wataire?

American—I gave the waiter half a dollar

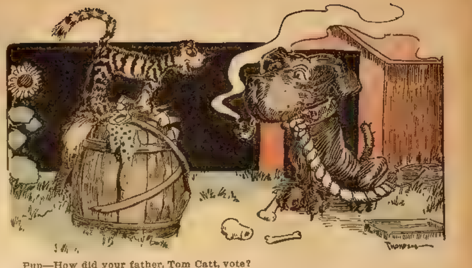
Frenchman—Mon Dieu! Zat ees not von teep; zat ees one bribe.

Lost Control.

Redd—Did you hear about my neighbor losing control of his automobile?

Greene—No, I didn't

Redd—Well, he did. The sheriff's got it now



Pup—How did your father, Tom Catt, vote?

Little Tom—Oh, same as usual.

Pup—And how is that?

Little Tom—Why, he scratched his ticket.

In Training.

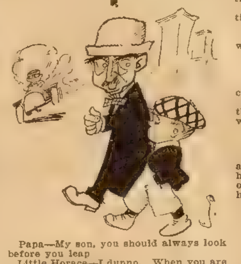
Father—Well, my son, you have now got your commission and prepared to join your regiment and fight for the glory of our country. Do you think you have the necessary qualifications?

Young Officer—Well, I should think so. I am the champion long-distance runner of our club.

Properly Trained.

Knocker—Why does Jones keep a parrot?

Bocker—It is trained to yell cuckoo ten times whenever he comes home



Papa—My son, you should always look before you leap

Little Horace—I dunno. When you are in the middle of the road an' an auto horn toots right in your ear you'd better leap without stoppin' to take a look.

Not Conpulsory.

A man who has just returned from an extensive trip in the East, tells this story on behalf of himself: "I went into the diningroom of one of those big hotels for dinner. Three waiters in quick succession asked me if I would have soup. By the time the third one reached me I was a little annoyed, so I asked the fellow: 'Is it compulsory?' 'No, sir,' the waiter replied, 'I think it's mock turtle.'"

He Can't.

"Before you were married you said that you couldn't do enough for me."

"Well, I guess that time has proved that I was right"

The Occasion.

They had been having a little tiff.

"Oh, of course," said he, wrathfully. "I am always in the wrong.'

"Not always," said she, calmly. "Last week you admitted that you were in the wrong——"

"Well, what's that got to do with it?" he demanded.

"Nothing, except that you were perfectly right when you admitted it," she replied.

Died Game.

First Kansas Man—I hear that a hoss thief died rather sudden las' night.

Second Kansas Man (leader of necktie party)—Y-e-s; he wasn't sick long.

"Did he die game?"

"Like a rooster—jist like a rooster—with his spurs on!"

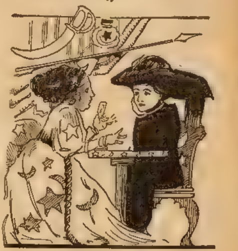
In Ambush.

"Slow down, chauffeur. I see some curious red ferns."

"Better lemme keep going, sir. I think those are the local constable's red whiskers."

A Genuine Restorer.

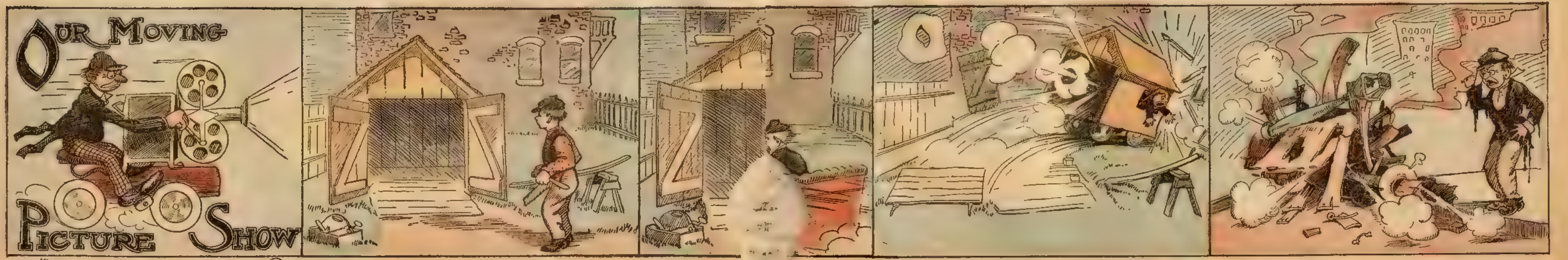
A man dropped his wig in the street, and a boy picked it up and handed it to him. "Thanks, my boy," said the owner of the wig. "You are the first genuine hair restorer I have ever seen."

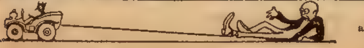


Penurious Widow—Will I marry again?

Card Reader—Not for fifty cents; better try a dollar reading.

THE NEW O GARAGE.





Mr. Kerchug—Well, I've got it finished, all ready for my new auto.

"Here we are [illegible] ergotten how to stop it!"

"Ow! Help, help! Stop us, somebody! Police!" (Crash!)

"By George! It's lucky I got out alive! Those auto people shouldn't have let me drive so soon!"

THE GOLDEN SERPENT

By George Wycherley Kaye

[Copyright 1912 by W. D. Boyce Co.]
Begun in No. 2, Jan. 18. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CONCLUSION.

IT IS not necessary for me to go into details of that affair, here. But Olive heard of it, and in a stormy interview with her she swore that I should repent of what she was pleased to call my treachery to herself. I told her, rather bluntly I fear, that she, Olive, had no claims upon my affections; and I only shrugged my shoulders when she hinted that the papers, of which I have told you, were in her hands, and that I should never have them. At that time I attached no importance to this, though I knew that her influence over the old duke was as boundless as was the trust he reposed in her, confiding as he did, the most important papers and matter into her beautiful, capable hands.

"During my last absence, the duke died suddenly, leaving Olive a small fortune by his will, and his estate is still in chancery. Olive disappeared, as soon as the duke's attorneys had paid her legacy over to her. Realizing, later on, that she might really have my papers, I had all Europe searched for her, but in vain. A few months ago I ran across Sydney Beauclerc, who had seen Olive at Wyndham-Towers during a visit there; and he told me that he had been amazed to meet her here in this, your city, gentlemen, where she was living under the name of Helen Clayton. Exactly how she had gotten the entree to society, I do not know; though I have heard that it was through the intrigues of a former infatuated British consul. However, she was always an aristocrat, to the manor born. It was for the purpose of inducing her to give me those papers that I came to this city, some months ago.

"You will not misunderstand me, I am sure, if I say that the sight of me seemed to revive in her much of our mutual past. She invited me to call on her, and, sometimes, seemed glad to see me; though, at other times, she was moody, nervous, and whimsical. I asked her for the papers several times, but she always put off the day of the restitution that she had, in one of her softer moments, promised to me. I fancy that thinking she had wronged me, led her, also, to make me sole legatee; though I fancy that, like a woman, she thought that I should have married her when I was a subaltern.

"We had several tiffs here, concerning the papers. It made me mad to think that this woman alone stood between my mother and the justice due her in the eyes of the world. At such times I almost hated Helen, or rather Olive; especially one day when a Mr. Brown, whose engagement to herself she had broken off shortly after my arrival, came in upon us, unannounced, as we were in the midst of a quarrel about the papers.

"Two weeks ago she sent for me quite late one night. On calling, I found her in an extreme state of agitation. Hysterically she told me that while she had been out at a society function that evening, she had taken such a headache that she had come home quite early. As she had passed through the drawingroom she noticed, at once, that her private cabinet had been ransacked. Even a secret drawer had been broken open, and my papers had been abstracted therefrom. The servants had all been out save the butler, who, I suspect had been asleep.

"I went up with her to the room. A glance showed me how the game had been worked. The burglar had only to climb a tree whose branches touched the house wall on that side, lay a short plank across to the sill, force the window, and he stood in the room. The peculiar thing about it all was that nothing else in the room had been touched, although various costly articles of jewelry were in plain sight near the cheval-glass. I cannot, to this day, imagine who could have known of those papers save Helen and myself, nor conceive of the reason for their theft. Helen was equally in the dark. I know that she was sincere, for she bitterly upbraided herself for not having given them to me before.

"You may fancy therefore my surprise, tonight, when I received that mysterious message over the telephone. Jumping into my coat, I came down here as fast as a hansom could bring me. I turned on the lights here in the library, and, opening the window, I stepped on the veranda. I was recalling to myself instances where burglars had thus returned papers, worthless to themselves, though invaluable to others, when I stumbled over some large object in the darkness outside. I lit a match and found it to be this box. With much effort, I got it part way through the window when that paper with the red letters on it attracted my notice. It was pinned to the top of the box. As I picked it up and looked at it, it suddenly dawned on me that the whole thing was a trap. I knew the suspicions as to myself regarding Helen's death, and I saw instantly that this was part of a plot. Just then you knocked at the door. I was just hauling the box across the floor," he added absently.

"What was that fearful yell? And why did you run from us?" asked the attorney, fixing his gaze on Cecil.

"Yell? Oh! I accidentally stepped on my fox-terrior; nearly crushed the poor beggar, I fear. As for running, I felt as if I simply must see what was inside that box before you people did. My nerves were unstrung; I have worried over Helen's death so. There wasn't anything in it, after all, but a gold bracelet."

"Can you remember whose voice it was that you heard over the 'phone?" asked Johnson. "Try and recall whose it was. Stop!—was it not a rather shrill one, with a curious lisping foreign accent?"

"By Jove!—so it was! It was not foreign, though; rather more like a provincial burr—Yes, I know now. It war a Westshire burr, now that I think of it. What Westshire woman here can know me, I wonder?"

"George! I have it!" exclaimed Peyton, peering through the magnifying glass at the paper square. "See here, Johnson. Hold the paper squarely; commence over on the right and read to the left, vertically down each column. But what does it mean?"

"'The Golden Serpent knows its sting.' What is the Golden Serpent?" said the attorney, frowning over the enigma. The others looked at each other as if to read the riddle there. What was the Serpent? And what did it have to do with Miss Clayton's death?

"Did you not say that she wore a gold snake on her arm, Peyton?" queried the professor.

"So she did, on her right arm. I saw it there the morning we were summoned to her house. But what has that got to do with it?"

"Yes, she did have such a bracelet," put in Cecil. "I remember it very well. In fact I was with her when she bought it. You all know that it has been a fad here, partly out of love of novelty, partly out of fun, for many ladies to go to one of these alleged seeresses and have their fortune told. One day, Olive, who was in one of her freakish moods, dared me to go with her and have ours told. I laughed and assented, and soon we were in the 'shrine' of one on Randolph street, next to the Sherman House. The seeress' face was heavily veiled with some stuff all spangled over with suns, moons, and stars; yet, when she saw us enter, she seemed to shrink further back into the gloom of the tapestries. There was a brazen tripod with incense burning on it, and a large crystal globe curiously lit up from below so that it glowed like an Australian opal

"'Oh! what a beautiful serpent!' exclaimed Olive, pointing to a gold snake that raised its spiral coils above an upright knob of the tripod. 'Do you want to sell it?' she asked the woman. 'I have always wanted a snake bracelet. How much do you want for it?' The woman bowed her head: 'You wish it? So be it! We will see later. Return in an hour. The moment is not propitious for me to read the Book of Fate.'

"After lunch at the Union, we went back and the seeress told our fortunes. By Jove! she gave me the creeps! It was positively uncanny how much she knew about both of us; she seemed to have known us all our lives. It seemed strange, so far away from home, here, in a distant country from our own. She predicted awful ends for us both. Her voice, too—Why, by Harry!—that was the same voice I heard over the telephone!" He broke off in sheer amazement, staring at them.

"Sure of that?" asked Bohan, alert to the value of such a startling clew.

"But what about the snake?" interjected Peyton. "Did Miss Clayton buy it?"

"Yes, she paid fifteen dollars for it. It seemed a ghastly trinket to me; I tried to joke her out of wearing it. I never saw her wear it."

"But she did, though," cried Peyton. "As she lay dead on the davenport, I noticed it on her arm."

"Where is it now? I would like to see it," said Witt

"It is in that box. That is another thing that puzzles me. Why put such a small trinket, wrapped up in a mass of paper, and then send it to me? Yet—let me see; she was buried with it on, you said, Peyton? It is part of the jewlery stolen from the vault, I wager. Ah! I see the plot. If it was found here by you, Johnson, that would be proof of guilt of some kind on my part. But what do you want to see it for?" he demanded of the professor.

Witt smiled slightly. "It is evident that you have not read of the Borgias and their contemporaries in Italy. Let me see it, please."

Cecil lifted the lid of the box, and reaching inside it, lifted out a glittering snake of gold with evil emerald eyes. The eyes of the men were riveted upon it as the professor proceeded to examine it under a powerful glass. Presently he

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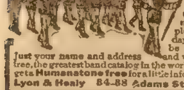

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raised his head. "Just as I surmised," he said quietly. "Look, Cecil! See those little golden fangs protruding from the serpent's jaws? Do you see that they are hollow? Let me take this snake to my house, Johnson. I have read somewhere of just some such devilish device."

"But what?—but how——?" objected Cecil.

"My dear sir, there are several known poisons, enough of which could be hid in that head and those fangs to kill an adult, if the skin were pricked by the latter, thus allowing poison to get into the blood. Probably if Peyton had examined that blue mark he noticed on Miss Clayton's arm under a glass, he would have noticed two tiny punctures. But, in any event, it is easy to make a certain experiment. Come over to my place and we can test my theory at once."

They all had risen in their excitement. Soon they were in Johnson's car and on their way to Witt's. Arrived there, the professor threw his coat off, put on a rubber apron, and caught a guinea-pig from a cage in the room. Hold it, Peyton, till I shave off a spot and puncture it with the fangs of the snake. There—let it up."

The guinea-pig scrambled to its feet and stared with blinking eyes at the breathless spectators. Presently it turned and started to cross the floor. Suddenly it stopped dead short; for a full minute it stood there, while a spasm shook its frame. Then it toppled over to the floor and lay still.

"Quite dead!" ejaculated Peyton, picking it up and putting his ear to its heart. "Deader than a door-nail, by jinks! But why did that seeress want to murder Miss Clayton? Or, did she want to? Who are you 'phoning, Johnson? 'To have her arrested?' All right. Let us go back to Cecil's house. That infernal animal makes me sick."

Hardly were they back in Cecil's library than there came a heavy knocking at the front door, followed by the clamor of several voices and cut through by the piercing shrieks of a woman in mortal agony. The sound of it went through them like a knife. What new horror impended in the darkness of that gloomy house? Cecil sprang through the door, to see what it was. Down the hall came the heavy tramp of men's feet, mingled with the wailing of a woman in great pain.

"What is it sergeant? We—all right, bring her in here, men. 'Run over by an auto and insisted on being brought to my house?' Put her down on that sofa. Why—my God!—it is Berenthine!"

At the sound of his voice the woman opened her eyes, black eyes, that glowered upon him with a terrible hatred. "You—Topham Cecil!" she shrieked. "You—I hate you! You deserted me, did you? You came over here to be with her, the putty-faced doll! You could not fool me. I lived near you in London and watched you. For five years I have followed you; and the devil sent you both to me—to tell your fortunes! What a joke! She got hers, all right."

She stopped, gasping for breath. Peyton gently wiped away the blood trickling from her mouth, mute witness of fatal internal injuries.

"Did you think to escape a curse? There's truth about the gipsies and their hate," she went on, glaring at Cecil. "I fixed that bracelet for her. As for you, I would have done for you, too—you fool. Two of my pals got that serpent—and we planted it on you. Then I 'phoned that attorney there, and, afterwards, lured you here. How I would have gloated over you in the dock. But now—but now——"

Her voice trailed off into a whisper as she sank back. For several minutes she lay there, while her life wrestled with the angel of death. Gradually a change came over her face; it softened, and a faint sigh parted her lips. She opened her eyes and gazed tenderly at Cecil, as he knelt by her side. A smile stole over her worn features.

"Kiss me, Cecil, before I go. Kiss me as you did in the old days." She strove to rise but fell back. "Quick, Cecil! Look inside my pocket, inside one; you will find your papers there. I stole them from her, one night, so that you couldn't get your rights and title, and so be able to marry her. I heard you two quarreling about the papers, a night before, when I was listening under her open window.

"Good-by, Cecil. I guess you know now how a gipsey can love—don't you? Good-by—good——"

Her whispering voice died away; the lines of her face relaxed; the fluttering bosom sank into the sleep of death. With all her sins and her hates, her loves and her strivings, she had entered the strange Passage that lies between the Courts of Conscious Being.

"Requiescit in pace," said Witt softly, drawing her veil over her tense, dark face.

"So be it," murmured Cecil, gazing down at her with troubled eyes.

The end.

* * *

Whence Derived.

Professor—Mr. Bilton, you will kindly outline briefly the fundamental law against bigamy.

Bilton—Yes, sir. You'll find it in the Bible. It says no man can serve two masters.

DREAMING.

I hate to read of millionaires,
  Because such reading seems
To hypnotize me utterly
  And start me dreaming dreams
How many times I've figured out
  What I'd be apt to do
If I were in that fellow's place
  And had a million, too.
Of course, I'd use my fortune well
  More sensibly than he
For I'd give ten per cent, at least,
  To worthy charity.
Another ten per cent would go
  To help along a few
Of our deserving relatives
  Whose bills are overdue.
And then my duty to the church:
  Of course a goodly share—
Say, twenty-five per cent or so—
  Would be devoted there
I'd give this latter quietly,
  Insisting that my name
Must be withheld, that none might know
  Whence this donation came
I'd only let the pastor know—
  He'd have to know, you see—
Because my name upon the check
  Would show it was from me
Another twenty five per cent
  Would do myself and wife;
The income we'd derive from that
  Would keep us both for life.
Then, after that—well, after that
  I dream away and plan
To spend still other ten per cents
  To help my fellow man.
And finally my dreaming gets
  A bit confused and then
I take a tumble and my feet
  Touch solid earth again;
And common sense assures me, as
  It stops me with a jerk,
I've wasted time enough to do
  A dollar's worth of work

* * *

Eulogy on Old Clothes.

"Certainly, my dear Uxora, you may have a new winter outfit," said the journeyman philosopher to the wife of his bosom, "but before you invest, it would be well for us briefly to consider the subject of clothing. It is a matter of grave importance and not lightly to be esteemed, for while the clothes do not make the man, they do make about three-fourths of the woman.

"Now, in-so-far as I am able to judge, the styles of this season in women's wear are neither comfortable nor becoming. All the wraps and dresses of the current fashion are shapeless and ugly.

"I should dislike very much to see the charms and graces of your matchless figure concealed by, and subordinated to, baggy and characterless garments, and I am sure that you are at once too artistic in temperament and too strong of mind to consent to array yourself in such unlovely creations merely because fashion dictates them.

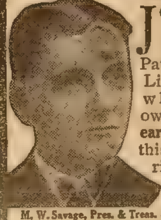
"A woman of your radiant loveliness, incomparable charm of manner, and inimitable sense of beauty requires no sartorial assistance to render her distinguished-looking and generally attractive. Indeed, the tawdry finery with which ordinary women bedeck themselves should in a measure detract from your charm, as a gaudy gilt frame sometimes obscures a rare masterpiece of the painter's art. What you require is clothing that, while it is of good quality and suitable to the season, at the same time possesses some distinct features characteristic of yourself.

"There is no 'character' in new clothes. It requires time and wear to invest them with that fine air of distinction that gives them a worthy personal note. They must become adjusted to the peculiar lines of the wearer's figure, and acquire the wrinkles that betoken his or her characteristic poses. Such clothes have a gift of expression that is like the physiognomies of the great.

"They certify to their own and to their wearer's worth. 'There is nothing fickle or ephemeral about us,' they seem to testify. 'We are superior to the mutations of style; we are not in the fashion—we are the fashion in our immediate realm.' There is nobility in such clothing when worn by one of rare beauty and magnetic personality. That you possess these qualities none can deny.

"While it affords me joy to gratify your lightest whim, my sweet Uxora, and I will gladly provide you the funds to procure all the new clothing you desire, I must say that to me you are most charming and beautiful in those garments that you have worn long enough to identify them with your dear self. Of course, if it is your pleasure to dress in a way that will appeal to strangers and delight the eyes of casual acquaintances, who do not esteem your beauty, wit, and worth as I do, rather than to charm my adoring eyes by arraying yourself in familiar garments, I offer no objection. It is my mission to make you happy, at whatever cost to myself. But to me you are never so beautiful as when clad in the simple raiment that you have worn for the last year or two.

"Oh, very well, Uxora! Here is a blank check—fill it out to the amount you need. But either I am losing the gift of persuasive speech, or you have been talking with those blamed women who presume to think for themselves."



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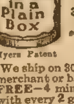

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Marrying a Title.

(Continued from page four.)

domineering tactics of the banker's daughter had cowed into submission and reserve, would scarcely have recognized the present bronzed and changed Florence at first glance.

A being with a noble, definite purpose in view, day by day the true pure soul of the friendless girl had strengthened. She no longer shrank from others. Vague perils no more affrighted her. Like a star of hope, her faith and courage in right buoyed her up amid the discomforts and weariness of the long journey she had taken.

From what she had overheard in the Vansant library, Florence had gained sufficient details of the plot against Rolfe Ashley and his progress to direct her definitely when she reached Rio de Janeiro. She had even the name of the false guide into whose power the young bank cashier had been lured. It was Pedro Sanito, and he was known as a man who made a living by acting as guide to the interior for tourists and prospectors. Of late, however, he had been something of a smuggler and speculator.

It was not difficult for Florence to locate his usual headquarters. As she expected, the man was away—"on business." She made sure from inquiries that the person he had ostensibly gone away with to guide was the disguised Rolfe Ashley.

They had over thirty days the start of her. Florence did not hope to overtake them. She was resolute, however, to learn where their journey would end. Now, at the end of three weeks' travel, she had arrived at the very limits of civilization.

All around her was the grand Brazilian forest. It was the morning hour, and at her feet lay a broad, rolling stream. A tawny-skinned native leaned against a tree and surveyed her speculatively.

"Here I must pause—hence I must go back the long journey we have pursued," he was saying.

"But the contract was to convey me as far as Paros," spoke Florence.

"Listen, senorita," responded the guide gravely. "Ever is old Riveria faithful to his trust, even as they told you at the great city. Observe, though, and do not ask me to risk the few years of life left to me, so precious to my little family."

As he spoke, the man pointed to an immense tree. A sharp tool had planed off a section of its bark smoothly. Upon this paint or bright dyes had limned the outline of some cabalistic letters or signs.

"Twice this morning has that warning appeared," said Riveria solemnly.

"Warning?" repeated Florence vaguely.

"Yes, I am of the Abijas. The district beyond is given over to the Pernos. That warning tells that any of my hostile tribe found within these limits will be killed. I can go no further."

"But there was Matoi, the last station on the river," said Florence. "I only wished to reach there. It was our agreement, you know. I will pay you well."

"Senorita, do not tempt me with the yellow gold. Listen, you cannot miss the river trail here. Keep straight on, and ere the sun is noon high, you will have reached the Ventura plantation. There, doubtless, will be found a guide to convey you to Matoi, or even farther into the wilderness beyond."

"I must be content with that, I suppose," murmured Florence, in a disappointed and anxious tone.

She paid off the old guide and started alone southwest along the river bank as he had directed. Paros was the last settlement John Vansant had named. It was from here that the treacherous guide, Pedro Sanito, had been directed to start with his charge to lead him to some wild tribe in the mountain district beyond.

Florence kept close watch of all about her as she proceeded on her way. There were dangers of natural pitfalls in the remote trail, perils from lurking beasts of prey and natives. At her belt the lonely traveler had two revolvers, and she carried a small but effective rifle.

Just as the sun was at its zenith, Florence came to a jungle opening through which at a distance she could make out the rude buildings of a frontier coffee plantation. The place was surrounded by a palisade, and as to purposes of protecting its inmates or confining them, was as secure and impregnable as a jail. On the hillside, about half a mile from the inclosed plantation, was a small hut. Even at a distance Florence caught sight of a woman hanging out some clothes, with children playing about her. This drew her toward the spot.

Day and night, at every spare moment, Florence, from books and by listening to those with whom she came in contact, had managed to acquire quite a good idea of the Spanish language, and as she had progressed from Rio de Janeiro she had become quite familiar with the various dialects spoken. She was, therefore, able to address the woman intelligently when she reached the hut.

Florence was almost exhausted from her long and arduous journey. All she thought of for the present was rest and food. The eyes of her hostess shone gratefully when she handed her a gold coin and asked for shelter until the next day.

"You shall have the very best my poor domicile affords, senorita," promised the woman. "We are very poor, with very little coming in and a large family to support, but I will at once send the coin to purchase comforts at the plantation store."

"You are a widow?" ventured Florence.

"Oh, no," replied the woman brightly. Then her face clouded, as she added: "But my husband is the serf of cruel masters. See, here he comes now. Is it not pitiful?"

Florence gazed in deep sympathy and disquiet at an approaching man. He was coming from the direction of the coffee plantation, and was evidently a worker there.

About his waist was a double steel chain, and dragging at its end behind him was a huge metal ball that must have weighed over one hundred pounds.

CHAPTER XIV.

"DIOS TE DE."

The native woman ran forward with a cry of love and concern, and lifted the heavy iron ball so that her husband could proceed more readily. He came up to the bench where Florence sat just outside the hut, and saluted her courteously.

Despite his miserable condition, there was a native ingenuousness and politeness in his bearing that attracted Florence. She experienced a deep pity for the unfortunate man. His wife had sent one of the children with the gold-piece with directions to purchase food. The man, exhausted, sank to the bench.

"A visitor, a lady who craves our hospitality for the night," explained the woman to her husband.

"It is well," bowed the Brazilian. "You have come far, señorita?"

"From Rio de Janeiro."

"Alone?"

"Only a part of the way."

"The man's face showed surprise and interest. Florence briefly related how she was bent primarily on reaching Matoi, and how her guide had feared assassination in a hostile district, and had deserted her earlier in the day.

"It is true," nodded the man, whom his wife had called Rodigo. "It is the law of the different districts. For instance, as far as Matoi I am safe—none safer, none better known. Beyond that I, too am forbidden."

"Then you know the country?" asked Florence, eagerly.

"Like a book, senorita."

"And could guide me to Matoi?"

"Were I free, yes," responded Rodigo, in a bitter tone.

"You are not a slave?"

"No, but I am a peon."

"What does that mean?"

"By the native law, a man taken for a debt must work out the same for his creditor at a mere pittance a day. Such, lady, is my present unfortunate condition."

"Yes, his family was sick," explained his wife, "and he borrowed money he thought easily to pay. He could not, and was seized."

"And they not only give me the hardest work to do at the plantation," spoke Rodigo, "but chain me, as you see, so I cannot escape."

"If you were free," said Florence, a sudden idea coming to her mind, "would you be able to guide me to Matoi?"

"None better, lady," declared Rodigo, confidently. "There is no surer guide in the district, unless it be Pedro Sanito, and he has retired from the calling."

Florence gave a violent start. An eager light came into her eyes. Pedro Sanito—that was the name of the man she had been following, the decoy guide of her missing lover, Rolfe Ashley.

"Speak," she cried, urgently, "you know Pedro Sanito?"

"As a brother."

"You have seen him recently?"

"A month since; then only last week."

Florence was trembling all over with excitement and surprise.

"Where?" she inquired.

"He went through the district here with an American, a young man."

"Rolfe Ashley," murmured Florence, in an intense tone.

"He was guiding him west. Pedro returned, as I say, three weeks later."

"Alone?" inquired Florence, in accents of dread.

"Yes, alone."

"What of his former companion?"

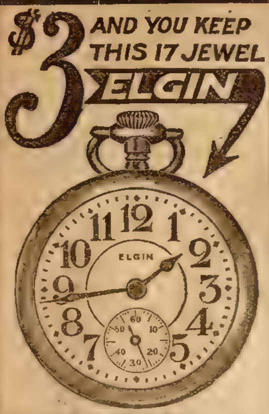
Rodigo shrugged his shoulders lightly and laughed, a hard, grating, cynical laugh.

"Did you ask him?"

"No," replied Rodigo; "he would not have told. Pedro said he had received a large reward for a special mission, and that having enemies at Rio de Janeiro who had sought his life, he would not return there, but would emigrate to Mexico."

"Lost—lost, all trail, all clew to guide me to my missing friend!" moaned Florence, and she sank back on the bench overcome.

The native viewed her in a pitying, speculative way. He seemed to be thinking. Finally he asked: "The American stranger was known to you, senorita—a friend?"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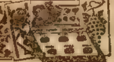

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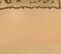

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"Yes, a very dear friend," confessed Florence. "Describe him to me."

Rodigo did so. Even through the disguise he wore, Florence was certain that she recognized the deluded and exiled Rolfe Ashley.

"Listen to me," she said to Rodigo, rousing herself. "You are under a debt?"

"Alas, lady, a very large debt, which it will take me a lifetime to pay," answered the native, with grave face.

"How large is it?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"Once paid, you are free?"

"As the air."

"I will pay it," pronounced Florence, definitely.

"You?" shouted the man, incredulously.

"You," echoed the woman, in a shriek of joy.

"Yes, I will pay the $500, providing you will guide me to Matol."

"Ah, how willingly!" cried Rodigo.

"And farther, if you dare to venture."

"For such a friend as you!" exclaimed Rodigo. "Lady, I am your slave—my life is yours."

The native fairly groveled at her feet in humility and thankfulness. His wife crooned blessings amid her joyful gratitude.

"It is to find the American stranger I saw with Pedro?" interrogated the Brazilian.

"Yes."

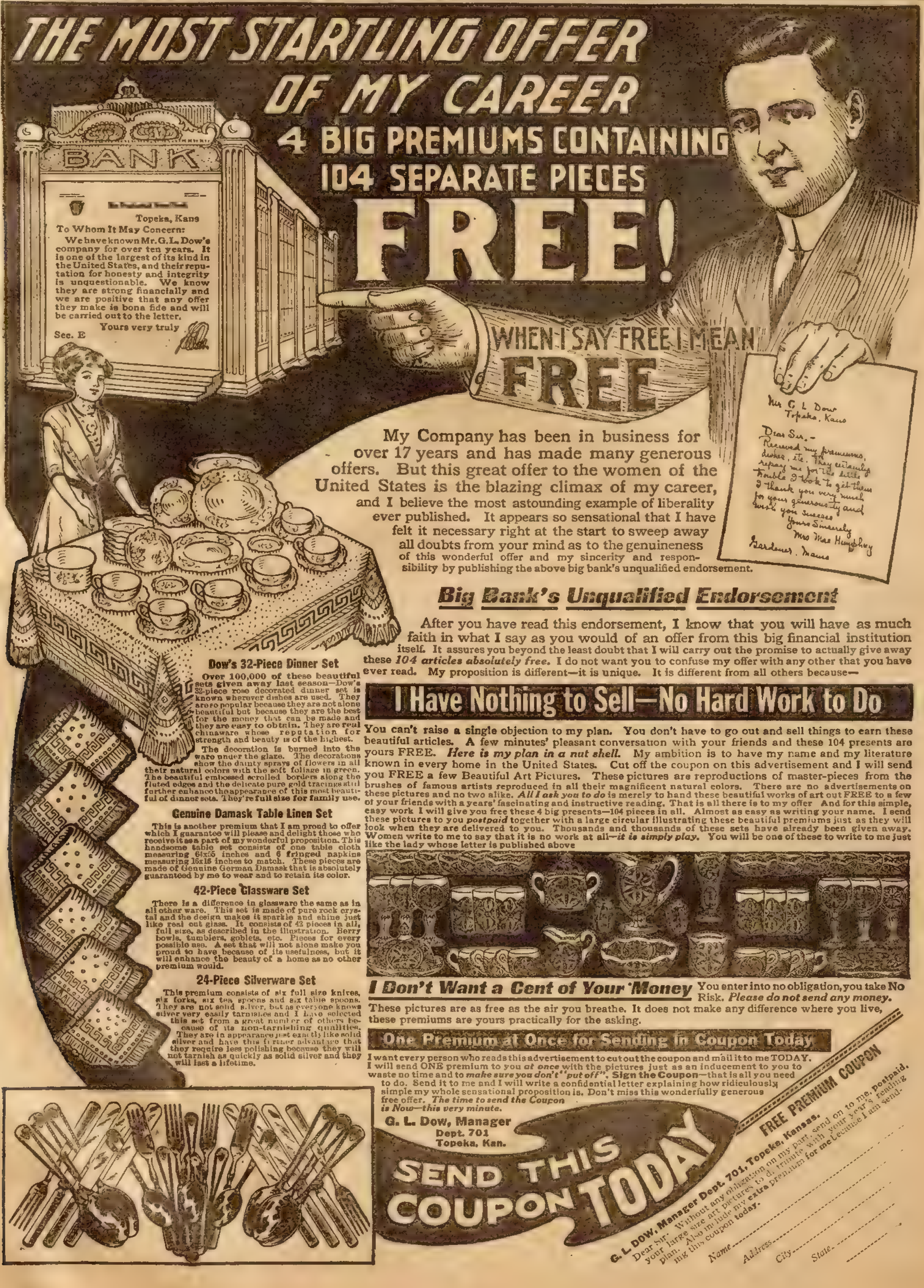
"You wish to know what has become of him?"

"I must."

"I can guess, senorita, readily."

"Tell me, tell me!" breathed Florence fervently.

"Before this, Pedro has gone on mys-



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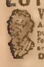

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terious missions, accompanied beyond Matoi by a white man."

"My father!" murmured Florence to herself. "Could he have been among them?"

"I know that Pedro has been hired to remove troublesome enemies from the path of those wishing them harm," continued Rodigo. "He is no assassin, but—well, he knows how to dispose of them."

"Tell me how," implored Florence.

"Beyond Matoi is the district of the Vasco. In the center of the dominion is the temple of their sun god. Their sacred fires are kept ever aflame by attendants robed in white. When they can have a white face also, they deem the attendance more nearly perfect."

"I understand," murmured Florence, anxiously and not hopelessly. "And you think these men Sanito has led into this wilderness have become slaves of the tribe you tell about."

"It is almost certain, lady."

"Can we reach this secret temple of theirs?"

Rodigo looked serious.

"It would be at the risk of our lives, lady."

"I would pay you $1,000 to go with me."

"Let me think it all over, senorita," said the Brazilian. "It may be possible. By morning I will decide."

The soft, silvery moonlight brought calm and beauty to the scene, as later, quieted but thoughtful, Florence lay in a native hammock, sinking into a slumber after a refreshing meal her hostess had furnished. From a distant tree a stray bellbird of Peru sent forth its liquid note, described by the reverential natives as a pronunciation of the benediction, "Dios te de"—"God be with you!"

Far from civilization, with darkness, dread, and peril before her, Florence felt a new trust pervade her soul—the calm, sweet confidence that Heaven would guide her steps in the quest of right and justice and love.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LURE OF WEALTH.

"That's the idea, is it?"

"That's the idea, exactly. Do you warm to it, or shall I see some one else?"

It was back at Irondale that an interesting scene was in progress. At the time that Florence Henderson was pursuing her difficult journey from Rio de Janeiro to the frontier, fate was busy weaving the meshes of new plot and counterplot at the point where the original scheme of the banker, John Vansant, had started.

Seemingly all was going swimmingly with the plans of Vansant and his daughter. The former had received his $100,000 from the surety company. William Marsden had been paid his $50,000, and was no longer a menace. Vansant had been enabled, with his stolen capital, to perfect an option on a traction proposition which had risen many times in value. His face was brighter, his step quicker. He was a prosperous man, with a vast fortune promised in the near future.

As to Blanche, she had recklessly swept all obstacles and worries from her path. Her harsh, cruel nature recked little of the fate of the man she had fancied she loved, Rolfe Ashley. The ambition of her life had been attained. All society and the local press rang with the story of her conquest of "a real live count!" The latter was all the rage—feted and cultivated by the men, petted and longed for by the women.

Blanche led in the race, not only for social supremacy, but in securing the largest share of the attention of the Count. The latter spent money like a millionaire, and lived like a prince. He had the most elegant suite of rooms at the principal hotel, and he devoted a part of his time to looking over various steam and electric traction and lighting propositions. It was given out that his syndicate was going to make an enormous investment in the securities of these concerns. Vansant was his adviser in these plans, and was congratulated when it began to be generally whispered about that the Count was considerably attracted by the charms and boasted wealth of his beautiful daughter.

The scene of the episode which opens this chapter, however, was far from the gilded halls of the Vansant mansion. For all that, it had a certain connection with the plots and underplots of the resourceful Blanche Vansant. There was in Irondale an old, miserly man of money, who had vainly sought her hand. More than once the scheming Blanche had thought of Adam Dale as a final resource in marriage, in case she failed to find a young husband with riches. Now, of course, she scorned the idea of selling herself to a niggardly, superannuated miser, with the opportunity afforded of allying herself with a title and the presumable heirship to millions.

Adam Dale had been a little soured at her manifestations of contempt. He had found himself only one of a group of admirers whom Blanche had led on and then discarded, but he bore her no particular malice.

A chance to get even, however, had been presented to him. The conversation noted at the beginning of the present chapter announced this fact. It was Martin Blomer, the outcast journalist, who spoke the words chronicled.

"That's the idea, exactly. Do you warm to it or shall I see some one else?"

The crafty-eyed old miser regarded his threadbare, desperate-looking visitor speculatively.

"See here," he said, in his thin, piping tone, "say that all over again."

"I offer you a chance to see the false-hearted siren, who has duped and discarded both of us, humbled to the dust," spoke Blomer, harshly and bitterly.

"That would be some satisfaction," chuckled Dale, malignantly, "but it's not money's worth, only sentiment."

"You can't lose anything."

"Why can't I?"

"Because, as I show you, I shall make a cool thousand out of my work."

"Those newspapers pay pretty high, don't they?"

"For a first-class sensation, always."

"How much do you want for expenses?"

"Half the amount."

"And I get?"

"My entire fee."

"One thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

"You're pretty liberal, aren't you?" questioned Dale, suspiciously.

"All I want is revenge," pronounced Blomer grimly.

"Well, it looks as if you're going to get it!"

"Do you agree?" pressed Blomer.

"Yes. Draw on me, report progress, time the explosion right."

"It will be on Blanche Vansant's wedding eve."

"Provided she ropes in the Count."

"H'm!" sneered Blomer. "He's a willing victim."

Whatever the nefarious bargain entered into by the two discarded suitors of Blanche Vansant, she might well have taken notice of it had she surmised its details. Little aware of the deep plot being slowly, craftily consummated by two implacable enemies, Blanche went on her way, heedless of menace, proud, defiant, imperious in her social triumphs.

She still harbored in her soul the old-time hatred and malice toward Lionel Marsden. To no one, least of all to the family of the millionaire, did she betray her true sentiments. After John Vansant had paid off the $50,000 he owed his old partner, Marsden had exhibited less rancour and dislike. He too, was appeased because of the easy, indifferent way in which Blanche closed the incident of the attachment of Lionel Marsden to herself. In fact, it was a part of the plan of the banker's daughter to make friends with the Marsdens, and they had been invited to most of the social functions given in honor of the Count de Blauvois.

Blanche had met and greeted Lionel Marsden without the least embarrassment of manner. She smiled sweetly on his new fiancee. She was affable to his mother and his sisters. She swept out the past in a sunny, gracious way that completely deceived the Marsdens.

Alone by herself, however, Blanche laughed in mocking, malice and glee, as she thought of the deep, dark pit she was preparing for these people.

"I hate them, root and branch!" she hissed hotly. "Oh, for the day when I can humble and crush them! As to Lionel, with his selfish, satisfied ways, I wish I could award to him some special revenge that would remind him in the after years of his life, of his mean-spirited behavior in giving me up because his father commanded it."

That wily brain was ever at work to carry out some subtle plan, having for its purpose the advancement of the ambitious schemes of its owner.

One evening the magnificent apartments of the Vansant mansion were a great glow of light and vivacity. The Count de Blauvois was on hand, the center of observation and activity. Later, amid the brilliant throng, as Blanche passed by the draperies of the smoking-room, she observed a small party of four at a card table. The group comprised the Count, Lionel Marsden, and two young men who had recently become close friends of the foreigner.

A furtive smile crossed the features of the banker's daughter, as she noted how eagerly and excitedly young Marsden engaged in play with the little pieces of colored cardboard.

"I have my cue," she murmured craftily. "I know how to proceed now in my plans to destroy the man who humiliated me by refusing my hand in marriage—Lionel Marsden!"

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* * *

Evasive.

George—Did you sell your horse for as much as you paid when you bought him?

John—Well—er—I sold him for as much as he was worth when I bought him.

* * *

Making Game.

"I fear you are making game of me," cried the Maine guide, as the nearsighted hunter shot him for a moose.

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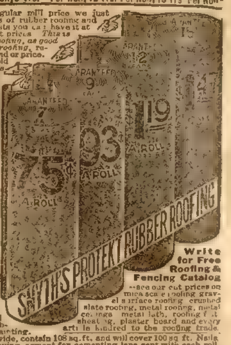

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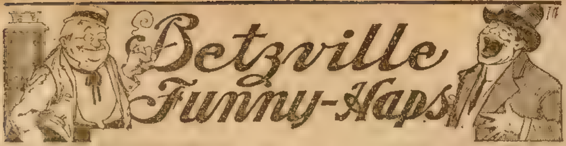

Finch and the Belgian Lap-Dog

By Ellis Parker Butler

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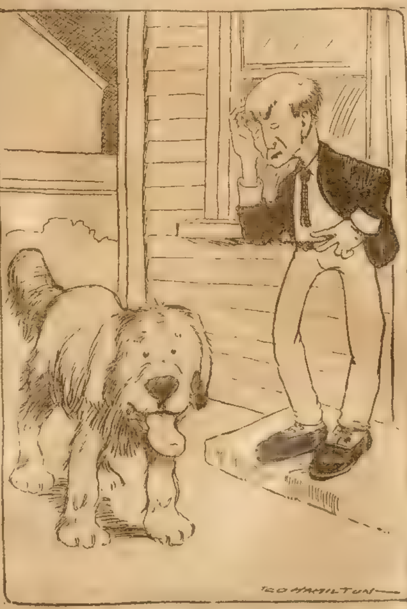


He said it was a Belgian lap-dog.

Will Finch gives notice to everybody in Betzville that the party that stole his Belgian lap-dog is known to him, and that unless the dog is returned before next Wednesday noon he will offer $5 reward for any information leading to the identification of the thief.

Will is all broken up over the loss of the dog. He paid a dollar for it to a passing tramp, who swore he had stolen the pup, or he couldn't afford to sell it for the price. The tramp said the pup was a Belgian lap-dog, and to prove it offered to let Will see it lap up milk, if Will would furnish the milk. He said he had just returned from a pedestrian tour of Mexico, passing through Belgium on his way to Betzville. Will sort of suggested that a lap-dog wasn't one that laps, but one that is small enough to sit in a lap, and the tramp fell right in with the notion. He told Will that was what made the Belgian lap-dogs so valuable, they were both kinds of lappers.

Will doesn't often spend money, and when he does, he likes to get his money's worth, and as soon as he paid for the dog he took it home and began lapping it, as you might say. He sat down in a chair and put the dog on his lag, but Will is so bowlegged that the dog fell right through his lap onto the floor. He tried it eight or ten times, and then he decided he didn't have the right kind of a lap to hold a dog on, but he was not going to waste a dog that he had paid a good dollar for, and the only thing he could see to do was to get a lap that woudl hold the dog properly, and the more he thought about it the more sure he became that what he needed was a feminine lap with a skirt, so the dog couldn't fall through. So he thought it over well, and he decided that Miss Daisy Plunkett would do. She was a small sized person, and about right to hold a small lap-dog.

Will Finch found right then that it takes longer to get a female lap into the family than to buy a lap-dog, but he was thoroughly aroused about it, and he went right to work courting Daisy, and he had just got to the point where he was ready to propose when he happened to look at the dog carefully, and he was all taken aback. The dog had grown a lot, and was as big as a good-sized coach dog. Will saw immediately that Daisy Plunkett wouldn't do at all—she didn't have nearly enough lap to hold such a large lap-dog.

So Will went about town for a week or two studying the height and breadth of all the unmated ladies of our burg, and at last he decided that Sally Ann Scroggs was about the rangiest limbed he could find, and that she would fit the dog pretty well, and he started in to court her for all he was worth, and by and by she began to incline his way a little, and he was just on the point of proposing when he happened to study the dog again, and he saw right off that Sally Ann wouldn't do. The dog was as big as a Newfoundland by that time.

Well, Will was nearly broken up over it. He couldn't think of a lap in all Betzville that would be big enough to hold a lap-dog the size of a Newfoundland, and yet he hated to think that he had paid good money for a lap-dog that couldn't be lapped. It was like wasting the money. First he thought he would write to New York and get in communication with an agency that handled Human Curiosities; he thought he might be able to find a Human Curiosity that ran mostly to lap, but he hesitated. He could not be sure the Belgian lap-dog had stopped growing, and he hated to go to the expense of marrying a Human Curiosity only to have her lap soon outgrown. So he moped around, and got thinner and thinner, and worried himself nearly to death, but there didn't seem to be any way in which he could get value received for the dollar he had spent for the lap-dog

Then, just when he had reached the lowest depths of worry, Uncle Ashdod Clute suggested something that cheered Will up again, and made him as happy as of yore, and the next thing we knew, Will was packing his goods in boxes and laying in timetables. And the funny thing, so he said, was that he hadn't thought of it before. So he packed his belongings, and had them shipped to the Junction, and bought a new suitcase, and bought a ticket to Salt Lake City. In talking it over with us, he said he saw plainly enough that no one lap could ever be big enough to hold that Belgian lap-hound, even as it was now, and there was no telling when it would stop growing, so the only thing to do was to secure an extensible lap, on the principle of a sectional bookcase, that could be added to from time to time to meet requirements. He said he was going to Utah and become a Mormon, and that right at first he did not calculate to marry more than two laps, for he figured the dog could stretch out and not much more than fill two laps, in his present size, but that if he kept on growing it would be easy enough to annex a few more laps. And just then somebody sneaked into Will's house and stole the dog.

Will's ticket runs out next Wednesday noon, and that's why he wants the lap-dog returned by then, but he is all at sea just now. He doesn't know whether to go out to Utah anyway, so as to save what he paid for the ticket, or to stay in Betzville and try to recover the dog he invested a dollar in. One way it looks foolish to go out and marry two or more laps when there is no dog to lie in them, and the other way it looks foolish to stay and recover the dog after the ticket has expired and when he cannot afford to spend any more to secure proper laps. He says this world is full of trouble and he will be glad when he is above, where the cherubim don't have any laps—only heads and wings.

Mr. Butler's Funny-Hap for next week is called "Mr. Scroggs' Identical Twins." Don't miss any of these funnyisms; they are good for the gizzard.

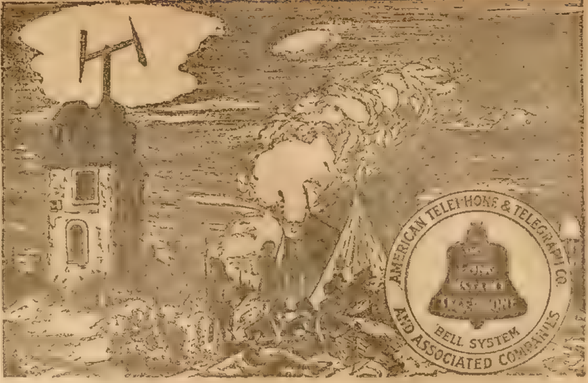
* * *

Peculiar.

"Odd thing about flattery."

"What?"

"It makes everybody sick except those who swallow it."



From an old print in La Telegrafie Historique.

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BOYS' AND GIRLS' CORNER

Hunting a Firebug;

Or, CHASING A LOST WILL

By J. M. MERRILL

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Begun in No. 2, Jan. 13. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

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CHAPTER IV.

HODAG HOLLOW.

"THE whole woods are afire!" cried the alarmed Billy.

Tall Till shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed steadily toward where a forked tongue of flame leaped heavenward. He stood in a sort of dazed wonderment as the fire dashed through the light shack with the velocity of a racehorse.

"Cut off!" he finally articulated.

"We've got to run for it, Till," echoed the fat lad.

And run they did, making for a far-off strip of light which would seem to indicate some sort of clearing. All about the boys was a pine slashing, the very best food for a fire imaginable. Till had seen more than one of these slashing fires and knew the danger.

The tall boy led the race. Being older and more experienced, Till felt it incumbent on him to take the lead. The lads raced through the woods with the speed of young wild steers.

"Hold on, Till!"

Billy yelled the warning in mad fashion as he came to a halt with the breath of a hot simoon in his face. Till recoiled as well—the fire had suddenly burst out directly in their path! Off to the right roared a seething mass of flame: Till halted, catching his breath with a gasp. He turned his gaze all about. There was but one spot untouched as yet by the fire. If they would escape they must lose not a moment's time.

"This way, Billy," called Till, whirling to the left, running like a frightened deer. Close at his heels followed his fat companion. Soon they skirted the fire, turned its flank army fashion, and ran on in the free woods once more.

"There's light ahead!" panted Billy.

"Yes," said Till, "that is Hodag Hollow—the lake is at the bottom of the hollow. Shall we go there, Billy?"

"Why shouldn't we?"

"Because——"

"Well, why don't you say something, Till?" almost yelled the panting Billy.

"Because they say the place is haunted."

"Well, then let's stay right here and burn up!" jeered the fat boy.

On dashed Till, having only halted his swift pace for a moment. Soon they reached the high bluff overlooking Hodag Hollow. At the bottom, so far down that the water looked like a strip of glass, glimmered the water of the lake, which was evidently less than half a mile in extent—a mere dimple in the great forest. Till had been to the lake once before, its uncanny history rather awing him, so that he simply gazed at it with feeble enthusiasm, then fled into the woods, not once looking back till the hollow with its pool was left far in the distance.

"Here you are, Billy."

"So I see; and this is Hodag Hollow?"

"True as preaching, Billy. How do you like it?"

"It looks good to me, Till."

"Well, sorter good, of course, but——"

"But the ghost, Till? What makes him haunt the lake?"

"A man was murdered near here and his body sunk in the pool down near that point yonder. Since then the lake has been haunted by the murdered man's spirit."

"Great!" laughed Billy.

"Don't it scare you?"

"Scare nothing!" laughed the fat boy. "I ain't afraid of anything dead—it's the live chaps we need fear."

"What's that?" suddenly spoke Till, pointing down to a spot near the point where it was said the body of the murdered man was sunk.

"I don't see anything but water and trees," said Billy.

"I do, right there next to those willows—see, it moves!"

Till clutched the arm of his companion excitedly. Billy refused to tremble as he shaded his eyes and followed with his gaze the pointing finger of his companion. He, too, soon made out a moving object. After a sustained glance, Billy broke into a laugh.

"It's only a canoe," he said, in a relieved voice. "Let's go down and see what it's like, Till."

To this the other readily agreed, and together the two boys descended the steep side of the bluff. They soon discovered that a fire had ravaged the hillside, biting great holes in the peaty earth. In some places the ground still smoked from the unquenched flame. By careful movement, however, the lads gained the willows by the waterside without much trouble. Beyond the edge of these the nose of the canoe was just visible.

"Now then, pard, we'll soon know what sort of water craft this is," declared Billy Gabbs, pushing his way boldly through the willows.

Till brought up the rear some yards behind his fat friend. He was suddenly startled by a yell of dismay from his friend. The next instant the fat boy came tearing back through the bushes, plunging so roughly against Till as to hurl him to the ground.

"What blamed nonsense is this?" cried Till, angrily.

Billy made no reply, but struggled to his feet, and tore on to the burned hillside as though pursued by fiends.

Panting and blowing the fat boy fell full length, rolling down to the foot of the hill, the smut and ashes daubing and disfiguring his rosy face.

"Run, Till, run!" yelled Billy, sputtering and dashing the dirt from his eyes with his sleeve.

The tall boy got to his feet, staring after his chum in dumb amazement.

"Such fool actions!" he muttered. "I wonder what it's all about."

He began to advance slowly toward the spot where Billy lay floundering.

"I saw it, Till! I saw it!"

"Saw what, you idiot?"

"The man that was murdered!"

"Nonsense," with a laugh. "That happened years and years ago, silly."

"Well, anyhow, there's a dead man out there, all the same."

Billy got to his feet, looking somewhat sheepish. The two then went back among the willows in company. Billy Gabbs had not been so far out of the way, after all. The charred remains of a man lay in the soft mud by the boat's nose, and in his fingers he clutched a packet of papers. This was a startling discovery, sure enough.

The face and parts of the body were burned beyond all hope of identification. The clothing was all gone and much of the flesh. It seemed probable that the man had perished miserably in the fire. It was a grewsome sight, quite sickening to the boys, who quickly withdrew. They began debating as to how long the body had been there.

"Wonder if 'taint Moses Bunker," suggested the fat boy, shuddering.

"No," said Till, "that can't be. This person has been dead too long—as much as three days."

"What shall we do now, Till?"

"Why, go right back to town and tell the authorities of our find."

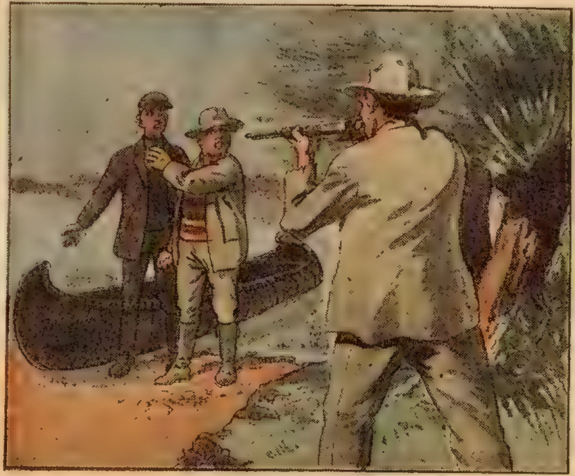
"In that case we give up looking for missing Moses."

"Sure we do."

"I don't want to do that, Till."

"Nor I, but it can't be helped now," declared Trodden.

After a few further remarks the boys, bracing their nerves to stand anything, returned to the boat. Both stopped short beside the canoe, Till going backward with a great cry.



"Get into the canoe!"

"Good heavens! where's the dead man, Till?"

Yes, where was he? The imprint of the body still dented the ground, but the thing itself was gone. Neither boy had seen or heard any sound; the puzzle was most mystifying. Something like a feeling of awe and dread stole over both. Till was the first to regain his senses.

"Somebody's been here, Billy," he gasped, in an awed whisper.

"R'else the dead man's walked off on his own account," answered Billy.

Till shook his curly head with a frown. There was no time for foolish remarks. The nature of the case was most startling. While the two boys stood debating, a low laugh grated on their ears. It seemed to come from beyond the willows, and above their standing place.

"It's Mose Bunker!" gasped frightened Billy.

Sure enough, standing on the lately burned hillside was the youth of trampish appearance who had so worried them a short time before at the house of Abraham Flight. He stood looking down upon the two boys, holding a leveled rifle in his hands.

"Hello, there!" he called.

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"Hello, yourself!" retorted Till.

"You've been following me, you young apes!" growled the tramp youth, showing his teeth.

"No, we haven't——"

"Don't lie to me! I know what I'm talking about. I don't want no more of it, let me tell you fellows. Get into the canoe, and get there mighty quick. You hear me?"

"Yes, but——"

"Get into the canoe!"

The click of a drawn hammer followed the command. Till wondered if the rifle was still loaded. If so, he knew it to be a deadly weapon in the hands of an experienced man. Was this tramp a dead shot? Not likely, and yet it would be taking chances to defy him.

"D'ye hear me, you cusses?"

"Oh, yes, we hear," and ducking low, Fatty Gabbs plunged headlong into the bottom of the boat. Till, hesitating, seemed disposed to argue the point.

"I want to ask you a few questions, old man?" he called.

"Get in the boat and skidoo, or I'll shoot ye full of holes!" yelled Bunker.

Till turned, and walked leisurely forward, and stepped into the canoe.

CHAPTER V.

A MAN OF MYSTERY.

A man stood in the shadow of a water willow watching a canoe which was crossing the lake at the bottom of Hodag Hollow. His face wore an anxious expression, and it was evident that he was in sore trouble.

"It's the boys," he muttered at length, his eyes kindling. "I am glad they have come to no harm."

The speaker retreated to the shelter of the trees, picking up a Marlin repeating rifle. He waited the approach of the canoe with studied interest.

"Hello!" he called, advancing as the prow of the canoe grated on the sand. "I had an idea that you boys would run from the woods when you found out that the firebug had stolen your guns."

The speaker was Abraham Flight, the settler at whose home our boys had met with an adventure earlier in the day. Disembarking, the boys were soon in joyful confab with the settler for whom they had taken a very decided liking. When they had told their story Flight leaned against a tree and frowned.

"That scamp is the firebug all right," he declared, "but I have grave doubts about his being Moses Bunker."

"That's what he calls himself, sir," said Till.

"Calling and being are not always jibing with each other," retorted the settler. "He is a bad young man at any rate. You saw some papers in the fingers of the dead man?"

"So Billy says—I didn't see them," answered the tall boy.

This was true, since Till was too much occupied at the time of the discovery of the body to notice the packet clutched in the dead fingers. There was no doubt of the fact, however, since the fat boy was very emphatic in his claims.

"And when you returned to the boat the body was gone?"

"That's the truth, sir," from Till.

"How do you account for that, boys?"

"Why, of course the chap came to life——"

"This is no time for fooling, Billy," broke in Till, with an impatient gesture. "It is plain that the tramp did the business, dragging the body into concealment. The man may have been murdered for aught we know. We hadn't time to investigate before Bunker held us up and ordered us to cross the lake. If I'd had my gun, things would have panned out different, I tell you."

"That's what," chimed in Billy. "We could have bested the firebug with half a chance."

"No doubt," with a dry laugh.

Flight went to the canoe and sat down on the prow, shading his eyes with one hand. He gazed long and earnestly at the figure of a man on the opposite shore. The bluffing tramp stood his ground over there, keenly watching the movements of his enemies.

"What shall we do now?" finally spoke Billy.

Silently, Abraham Flight rose to his feet, facing his two boy friends. His face wore a determined expression, with a troubled look filling his eyes.

"For me there is but one thing to do," he said. "I am going to hunt down this villain calling himself Moses Bunker. He has stolen precious papers from me, papers which have been in my possession for many years, a dozen or more at least. He must return them to me or yield up his life."

The emphasis given his concluding words fairly startled the boys.

Strange events were piling one upon another since they had left the buzz of the city hive to win for themselves the reward offered for the firebug.

Till was the first to recover his self-possession. He said:

"You have a secret, Mr. Flight?"

"Yes," smiting his chest with a clinched hand, "a secret that has gnawed at my heartstrings these many years. I have tried my best to forget, but it can't be done. When one takes the first crooked step there's no turning till he has cursed his soul with infamy!"

Whirling about, the man started to walk down the steep hillside, along the edge of the lake. The two boys watched his every movement with the deepest interest.

"Strange man!" thought Till. "And to think tnat the father of so nice a girl as Neva should have committed a crime."

His every action indicated remorse for an evil deed done in the past. Till was sorry not to have seen and wrested that packet from the dead fingers of the man in the willows. His curiosity was most deeply excited. The mission on which he had set out was of less importance now than the solving of the mystery of the stolen papers.

Why had the tramp stolen them? This was another phase of the case to be considered. The face of Abraham Flight was a handsome one, with marks of a strong character. It seemed strange, the boy thought, that a man like this one should stoop to crime.

"He's going to leave us," grunted Fatty Gabbs. "Queer guy, eh? He's off his nut, or I'm a fool——"

"Hist!" warned Till, "the gentleman is coming back."

And so it proved. Mr. Flight came striding back to meet the tramp-hunters once more.

"Beg your pardon, boys," said he. "I forgot to tell you what I wanted. I like you chaps; you did me a good turn when the fire got hold of my home. I feel sure I can trust you both."

"Bet you can," avowed Billy.

"We try to do right, anyhow," emphasized Till.

"That's good, boys, always stand for the right!" cried the man, his features working with deep emotion. "If I had followed that advice I wouldn't be where I am now. No, no!"

"Can we help you, Mr. Flight?" respectfully asked Till.

"Yes, you can, if you will."

"You bet we will, sir," encouraged Billy.

"I rushed away from home without taking time to think," explained the man. "My little girl is all alone in the house. Since these forest fires have been raging there has been danger all around. I ought not to have gone as I did, although until today I have never felt that danger threatened from any human being. This tramp who robbed me has a bad spirit. I feel anxious about Neva."

"Better go back home, then," suggested Billy, winking rapidly.

"I can't," with a groan. "I must find that villain who robbed me, and get back the stolen papers. He is over there on the far side of the lake. I mean to run him to earth—to kill him if he refuses to give up the papers!"

Till felt chilled at the look now on the face of Flight.

"We will keep you company, Mr. Flight," said the tall boy, "if you have no objections."

"No, you can have no interest in this matter, boys."

"You bet we have——"

"I'd much rather you would go back to my house and keep guard till I return—which won't be very long I feel sure."

The man spoke with extreme deliberation. His one-time excitement had gone, and he seemed as self-contained as a priest. The boys hesitated. It was rather humiliating, both thought to quit the woods without first recovering their stolen guns.

"We will go with you, sir," spoke up tall Till Trodden, "else keep by ourselves and hunt down this thief and recover our guns. You see——"

"I see," with a short laugh, "that you boy's aren't likely to compel the return of your weapons. If you were so anxious to get them back, why did you turn about and flee just now?"

A half-amused light filled the quizzical eyes of the speaker. Till winced and flushed at this implication of cowardice on his part. He resented the implication sharply.

"We were in the tramp's power, sir——"

"Very likely, and will continue to be, unarmed as you are. No, boys, I cannot permit you to accompany me. I go alone to meet the robber; alone will I fight him to the death. Should anything happen, conduct my little Neva to Gildwater, to your own home, Till. Mrs. Trodden will see that she is cared for."

"My foster-mother!" exclaimed Till. "So you know her——"

"Yes. She will not deny shelter to a daughter of mine, if ill comes to me."

With that the strange occupant of the forest home moved swiftly away, plunging deeply into the willows that lined the shore. The two boys stood regarding each other in a state of wonderment.

"That's the queerest guy I ever saw," ejaculated Billy Gabbs.

Till shook his head, deeply puzzled over what he had heard. He had heard his foster-mother speak of numerous friends of hers who lived in the town where she formerly lived, but Abraham Flight was not one of them.

Till Trodden hardly knew "where he got off," to use a slang expression of the neighborhood boys. His parents were such only by brevet, as he once jocosely expressed it. He had no memory of either his own father or mother. The ones he called by that name were really not of his blood. He had not learned this fact, however, till Mr. Trodden enlightened him in a fit of anger, one day, when Till had neglected some petty chore set for him by Trodden senior.

No one in Gildwater knew this, however. Trodden, the political head of his party, was supposed to be Till's father. Since making the discovery that he was merely a son of the Trodden home by adoption, the boy felt less allegiance than formerly to the exactions of a bullying father and whimsical mother.

"Practically an orphan," declared Till,

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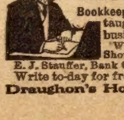

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feeling somewhat disturbed. When the reward was offered for a notorious firebug, the lad thought he saw a chance to get out from under the paternal wing and set up in life for himself. "When I do," he mentally resolved, "I'll find out my right name and bring it back to its own."

The boys stood debating, till at length Billy suggested taking to the canoe once more and paddling around the lake to keep track of the strange Mr. Flight.

"I don't quite like to desert that man," said Billy. "He's a pretty nifty chap, and with all his lordly ways I kind of cotton to him, eh, Till?"

"So do I, Billy," agreed Till.

The boys once more entered the canoe, resolving to hug the shore as they paddled along. They had progressed perhaps half the distance around the lake when both lads where startled by the sharp bark of a repeating rifle.

"There!" exclaimed Billy, dropping his paddle. "Our man has done as he said he would, and shot the robber!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SHOT FROM THE GLOOM.

There seemed to be no after results from that shot. Nothing stirred along the lake front, and our two boys, after the first hesitancy, continued to paddle down along the shore. From a clump of fire-scorched cedars a bit of smoke coiled, evidently from the gun the report of which had alarmed them.

"We'll go on carefully and see what it means, anyhow," declared Till.

They had not gone far when another canoe shot from the shore into the lake not ten yards in advance of them. This contained but one passenger—the boy tramp who had stolen their guns.

"Hold on there, you!" called Till.

Spang!

A rifle cracked back in the willows and a bullet cut the water at the side of the speeding canoe. Bunker, the tramp, plied his paddle with desperate fury, aiming to get beyond the reach of his enemy's bullets.

"Now's our time," cried Billy. "Run him down, Till, run him down!"

This the two boys attempted to do. They soon succeeded in forcing their canoe within a yard of the other.

"Surrender!" yelled Till.

For answer Bunker dropped his paddle, picking up a musket. This he leveled full at the breast of the tall pursuer. Till dropped at the flash of the gun, going overboard and directly under the canoe. Billy crouched low in the bottom of the boat, badly frightened.

The tramp pumped in another cartridge, leveling his gun at the crouching lad in the opposite canoe.

"For the love of Mike, don't shoot!" pleaded fat Billy.

By this time the two canoes had drifted together. Bunker, still covering Gabbs, shouted hoarsely: "Climb in here, quick!"

Billy obeyed rather than risk being shot.

"Now take that paddle and use it, you nigger!"

Again Billy obeyed. He paddled with all his strength, keeping the bow of the canoe headed for the far end of the lake. The fat boy sat between the excited tramp and the one who had fired from the shore, thus acting in the nature of a shield.

Baffled and angry, Abraham Flight emerged upon the shore and stood glaring after the receding canoe, which left the lately pursuing boat idly rocking on the water far in the rear. The settler had fired for the purpose of winging the tramp only. He was usually an accurate shot, and could have easily killed the other. He was in no wise desirous of figuring as principal in a murder case, however. His precious papers were of too much moment for him to permit of the successful theft of the same without a very serious attempt to regain them. He had sighted the tramp about to embark, and had ordered him to halt. Instead, Bunker had sprung into a canoe and attempted thus to escape; hence the first shot from the settler's rifle, which was intended to bring the robber to terms. And now the wily boy tramp had placed Billy Gabbs between his own person and the rifleman on shore.

Flight had no boat of his own. He resolved on skirting the lake in an effort to head off the fleeing youth. He had not taken a dozen steps when he beheld some one struggling in the water at the side of the drifting canoe from which Bunker had abducted the Gabbs boy. This was Till Trodden, whom Flight had supposed slain by the bullet fired by the robber tramp.

There was not a moment to lose. Flight's better nature prevailed, and he began to strip for a swim. While he was doing this he saw Till climb over the side of his canoe, shake himself, and resume the paddle. Then he knew that the tall boy had not been fatally hurt. Till paddled in pursuit of the tramp.

Flight resumed his clothes and once more set out to circumnavigate the lake. Much valuable time had now been lost, and the farther boat was nearing the shore of the hollow. Beyond this was a piece of swampy ground untouched by the sweep of the forest fire, and into which the fleeing young reprobate was likely to escape.

Chagrined at being so far baffled in his attempt to bring Bunker to bay, Flight

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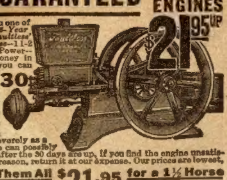

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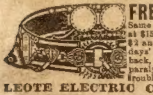

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ran on with clinched teeth, gun held in readiness for a shot.

"If I get another crack at you," muttered the settler, "it'll fare worse for you. I've been lenient, but since I saw you shoot to kill that boy, I know you to be a desperate character whom to kill would be no crime."

Flight halted as the foremost canoe grated on the sand. He raised his rifle, anxious to get in a shot before the tramp could flee to the screen of the swamp. Bunker yas not to be fooled, however. The moment his canoe touched the shore he grabbed Fatty Gabbs by the collar, and holding him up as a shield, he dragged the boy after him into the bushes.

When Till's canoe grounded, the tramp and Billy had both disappeared. Till, who had dropped overboard at the flash of Bunker's musket, had escaped death by a hair's breadth. He was entirely unharmed, however, and turned to greet the stout settler as he dashed up.

"Are you hurt, boy?" demanded Flight.

"Not a scratch, sir."

"Then follow me."

Flight led the way into the open mouth of a gulley, down the bed of which a small creek trickled into the lake. The ground was swampy on both sides of this, and not easily traveled. Man and boy pushed on with all possible speed, the elder holding his Marlin ready for instant use.

"I'll shoot him dead if I get the chance," grated the man. "I was too lenient when I had a good chance to kill him. He meant to lay you out, that is certain. He's a regular outlaw of the Jesse James stripe. I was a fool to hesitate when opportunity offered to fetch him down."

'I'd shoot only to wound him," ventured Till, who was very tender hearted about such matters, ready to shrink from shedding human blood.

"He is himself a murderer," returned the man, as he pressed grimly forward. "The dead stranger you boys discovered was doubtless Adam Toy, and old hermit who lived alone in the woods. As I came along I noted that his cabin home was in ashes. He lived not far from Hodag Hollow, and report said he had money horded somewhere about the cabin. This fellow who calls himself Moses Bunker is doubtless the firebug for whom that reward has been offered. You can't have very friendly feelings for a scoundrel who tried his best to kill you."

There was logic in what the settler said, and Till made no speech in contradiction.

Man and boy scoured the gully from its mouth to its source without results. When the upper ground was reached the fire-swept forest confronted them, grim and naked in its black ruin. Dark shadows crept here and there among the skeleton trees.

Night was soon to spread its bat-like wings across the devasted woods. No sound of animal or insect fretted the silence, nothing to denote life in any quarter. Here and there in the distance blinked the fiery eye of some still-burning fagot of pine, the expiring effort of a terrible fire.

"My, but what a lonely outlook!" shuddered the boy.

"We have missed them, somehow," said the other. "We had better turn back."

This they did, making a more minute search than before—still resultless.

Flight became gloomy and silent. Till was anxious about his friend Billy.

"Do you s'pose Bunker would harm my chum?" finally queried Till.

"I imagine he will use him where he can, after that he'll make no bones of putting him out of the way," answered the man. "This boy tramp is a scoundrel of the first water, a second Jesse James."

"Gracious! And yet you said when you knew him in the lumber camp he was a quiet, mannerly lad. Strange——"

"That was a yarn of mine," laughed the man. "I never really saw Moses Bunker in camp. What I do know, however, is that, judged by his parents, Moses Bunker ought to be anything but an outlaw. He had a sweet-faced mother and a wholly decent father. The boy Moses, however, is doubtless dead."

"Then this tramp——"

"Is training under false colors. He is much too old to be the real Moses Bunker, I am sure of that."

"Well, then the fire bug may not be Moses Bunker after all?"

"I don't think he is. Who said he was, anyhow?"

Flight eyed the boy keenly in the gathering darkness.

"Why, it was mother who first spoke of Moses as the incendiary, and dad fell in with the idea and offered the reward," informed Till.

"I see, I see!" muttered the settler under his breath. "I must find those papers; yes, indeed, I must."

Turning aside, the strange man walked alone into the shadows. Till watched him until he was lost to view in the gathering dusk. He had not thought that the settler would desert him there in the burned-over woods. He imagined the man would return soon and talk over what was best to do under the circumstances. He waited till darkness fell, then he called to his late companion. There came no reply, and Till imme-

(Continued back on page eight).

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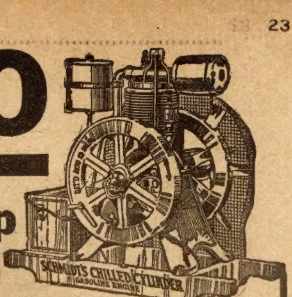

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Story of THE RED and THE BLUE

CATARRH

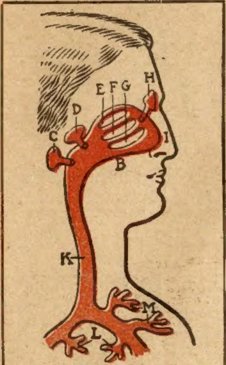

FIG. 1

Fig. 1—THE **RED** in the above cut shows the wide extent of catarrh—ALL THROUGH THE HEAD, DOWN INTO THE THROAT (K), INTO THE LUNGS (M & L); into the ears (C); into the frontal sinus (H); into the sphenoidal sinus (D), etc.

TO CURE CATARRH IN THE ABOVE PARTS IT MUST BE REACHED BY THE REMEDY.

The RED shows where Catarrh spreads.

The BLUE shows the limits of salves, sprays, liquids and other remedies.

The Blosser Medicated Treatment reaches everywhere the disease reaches. See Figure 5.

THE RED and THE BLUE, in the accompanying cuts, will show at a glance the one great fact about the treatment of Catarrh, viz.: that IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE to reach the disease with SPRAYS, DOUCHES and LIQUIDS of various kinds—much less with "BALMS," SALVES, SNUFFS, the ordinary "INHALERS," and all similar methods of treatment.

In the cuts, Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4, THE RED shows the parts that are attacked by Catarrh, and THE BLUE shows the result of the attempt to reach it by methods of treatment above mentioned.

In Fig. 5 THE BLUE shows the extent of the application of DR. BLOSSER'S CATARRH REMEDY, which alone reaches every spot that the disease may possibly attack, just as THE BLUE displaces THE RED in Fig. 5.

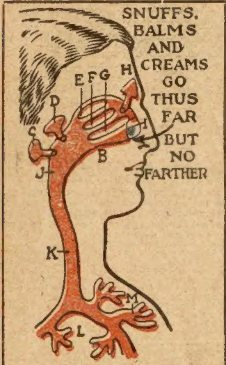

FIG. 2

Fig. 2—Illustrates the inevitable failure of SALVES, BALMS, SNUFFS, etc. SEE how much **RED** remains to show the parts unreached—how little of the **BLUE** to show the parts that are reached.

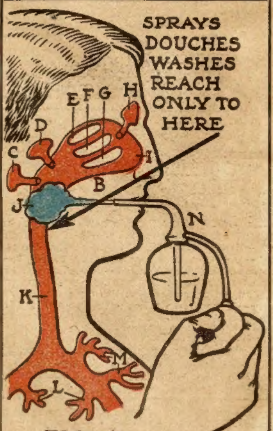

FIG. 4

Fig. 4—Shows how little of the mucous membrane is reached when the spray is directed into the mouth.

Dr. Blosser's Discovery

The problem of successfully treating Catarrh is the problem of applying directly to the inflamed and ulcerated membranes in the air passages a remedy that will disinfect the sores, destroy the germs, and set up a healing process.

It is the height of folly to try to heal inflammation and ulceration by medicines swallowed into the stomach, ALONE, when you can apply a healing remedy right to the disease.

It is equally foolish to try to heal a disease by a local application that does not reach half the diseased parts.

In these two things we have the explanation of the failure of the generality of Catarrh remedies and treatments.

One set of remedies is taken into the stomach, and they fail—every one of them.

Another set consists of sprays, douches, ointments, or balms, and they do not reach more than from one-tenth to one-half of the diseased parts, and whether the medicine itself has any healthy virtue or not, it cannot heal when it does not reach the disease. All remedies applied in those ways are a failure, and must be, no matter what they are composed of.

There is one more little class of applications which are, perhaps, the most useless of all. It is that class where you draw air through a little sponge or other porous substance in a tube, and get the odor—nothing more—the odor of a volatile, pungent, loud-smelling stuff, the inhalation of which impresses the nerves which give the sense of smell, but the fact is they accomplish nothing more than this. To call a remedy of that kind a medical inhalation is to practice a deception—it is not a medicine, it is only a smell.

In contrast with all these things is Dr. Blosser's Catarrh Remedy.

His treatment is unlike any other. It is not a spray, douche, salve, cream, or inhaler, but is a more direct and thorough treatment than any of these.

It consists of a warm vapor which is heavily laden with the medical extract of the remedy, and this is carried to every affected spot.

When you draw the vapor into the mouth and then let it come out through the nose, and when you "hold the nose" and blow, as in blowing the nose, the medical vapor goes everywhere, through the Eustachian tubes into the middle ears, through the little tubes into the frontal sinus where Catarrh gives you so much pain (in the forehead), into every sinus, cell and antrum, into the lungs and bronchial tubes, everywhere. It removes the stench of disease, it runs out the putrid, rotten accumulations, it reduces the inflammation, it sets the ulcerated membranes and tissues to healing. In due time it stops the annoying, catarrhal discharge, and then you are rid of the disease. If you will use the little precautions that we advise, you will never have Catarrh again.

These are the simple facts about Catarrh, and I give them as the result of 36 years' experience in the successful treatment of this disease. I leave it to the reader if what I have said is not clear and full of common sense.

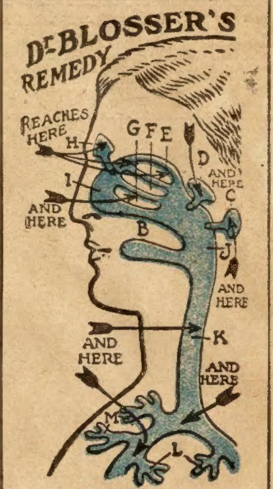

FIG. 5

Fig. 5—THE **BLUE** representing the parts reached by our Catarrh Remedy, has entirely displaced the **RED**, very fitly illustrating how Dr. Blosser's Catarrh Remedy reaches and heals every affected part. IT GOES EVERYWHERE, into every nook and corner in the throat, head and lungs. It goes to the MIDDLE EAR (C), into every sinus and cell (D and H). It gets under the turbinates (E, F and G), and into the THROAT and LUNGS (J, K, L, M); and everywhere it goes it exerts a powerful and healing influence.

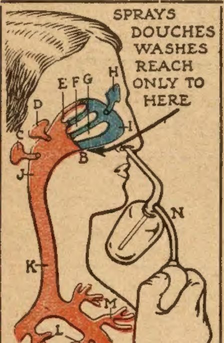

FIG. 3

Fig. 3—Shows how little can be done by ATOMIZERS, SPRAYS, DOUCHES, and all WASHES and LIQUIDS.

By no possibility can these methods of treatment reach the real seat of the disease.

WHY THROW AWAY YOUR MONEY and sacrifice your health, perhaps your life, by trifling with your disease in this way? THERE IS A BETTER WAY. See Fig. 5.

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Write a postal card, or cut out and fill in the coupon below, and we will send you by mail A LIBERAL TRIAL TREATMENT ENTIRELY FREE. If you suffer from Catarrh, Bronchitis, Asthma, Catarrhal Deafness or any other catarrhal trouble, YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO NEGLECT THE USE OF THIS GRAND REMEDY. Catarrh, if neglected, may extend to the lungs, finally leading to consumption. This remedy has cured Catarrh of every form in the nose, head, throat, middle ear and lungs. No matter who, or what remedy has failed in your case, this should cure you.

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